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H. S. S. S.

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H O M E.

HOME.

A NOVEL.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

EXPECT NOT A STORY DECK'D IN THE GARB OF
FANCY,—BUT LOOK AT HOME.

VOLUME V.

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H O M E.

CHAPTER I.

IN a few days, the grief which had been suppressed, not weakened in the breast of Lady Ornaville, broke out with increased force in consequence of a letter from her eldest son. She had made Constantia write to him of his cousin Louisa's marriage, as soon as she was informed of it herself, and it was in answer to this letter, that he now wrote to her. He expressed much satisfaction in the prosperity of Louisa, but said that he should have taken it kind if he had been

invited to the Abbey while she was there, especially, as it was a season in which he had been so much accustomed to be at Ornaville, that he did not imagine he should now have been forgotten. He said that he had only delayed his own marriage, from the hope that time would render his father propitious to his wishes; but from his neglect of him at present, he saw that he had no longer reason to indulge so agreeable an expectation.

This letter gave severe distress to Lady Ornaville. She immediately wrote to him that she regretted extremely, his not having voluntarily come to Ornaville at Christmas, as his father would have been much pleased with a visit from him, though he had not thought of requesting as a favour, what he might have expected from his affection without solicitation. That she was certain nothing would conciliate him more than kindness; and as a very short time had elapsed, since he was informed of his intended marriage, she trusted that he would yet wait patiently a little while, before he took any decisive step. She mentioned the deep affliction which they suffered from Philip, and urged it as a strong motive for

his not occasioning any additional distress to his father at present.

Her letter was full of kindness, and she hoped it would have some effect in retarding his marriage. More than delay, she could not now venture to hope; and his dreaded union with Sally Cusliffe, with all its train of melancholy consequences, appeared in array before her, as certain events.

But scarcely had she passed a day in mourning secretly the fate of her eldest son, before her attention was called to the situation of her youngest by the newspaper, in which there was an account of an action, which had been brought against him in the Court of King's Bench by Mr. Melfont. The circumstances of the elopement, with various particulars of Philip's and Mrs. Melfont's previous and subsequent behaviour, were detailed; and though none of them indicated any peculiar depravity in him, yet they offered no extenuation of his error, nor could his ingenious counsel urge a syllable in his defence.

Sir John and Lady Orville had indulged a

faint hope, that circumstances might appear on the trial, which would palliate the guilt of the parties; but this hope was now over,—which, with Philip's conduct being thus publicly exposed to view, had in some measure the effect of giving them a new shock.

The utmost endeavours of Mrs Almorne were unavailing to sustain Lady Ornaville under her afflictions, or to prevent her mind from dwelling upon them continually; and it was with deep concern she saw, from the impression which Philip's conduct in particular, had made both upon her and Sir John, that it was from length of time only, she could expect the least alleviation of their sorrow.

Their unhappy state of mind was aggravated by great anxiety about Frederic, of whom they had been long without hearing. The detention of the Hamburgh Mails accounted for his late silence, but did not relieve their fears as to the previous cause of it, and they could not help feeling the most painful apprehensions for the welfare of him and his family.

CHAPTER II.

THE uncertainty of Sir John and Lady Ornaville respecting Frederic was of short duration. In two days Mrs. Almorne received a packet from Mr. Hanway, which contained only a few lines from himself, but inclosed a letter from Mr. Armiger. Its contents were as follow :

“ TO EDWARD HANWAY, ESQ.

“ My dear Friend,

“ I wrote you a few hurried lines to inform you of Ornaville's safe arrival at Altona ; I write now to give you the intelligence of him that you desire. My account will probably be different from what you expect,—but I will not anticipate. I shall give you a regular and simple relation of occurrences ; for to you, every particular will be interesting, and it is only

from me you can ever know what has befallen him here.

“The instant he got to Altona, he came to me. He took hold of my hand with a pale and miserable face, but said nothing. I saw that he was afraid to ask after his wife, and I immediately told him, that she continued in the state in which she was when I wrote to you, but that I hoped his presence would restore her.

“He gave me your letter, and begged that I would go and prepare her for their meeting. I said that I would instantly go, but desired he would accompany me to her grandfather's, that he might be ready to see her the moment I thought her able to bear the interview.

“Upon going there, I found her lying on a sofa. I believe I told you, that she had from the beginning of her affliction, been prevailed upon to leave her bed, that she might see her aged grandfather, who was not able to come to her apartment, and was much distressed by her illness. She has since visited him every morning, and the rest of the day lain upon a sofa, apparently insensible. Her nights passed more

painfully ; she slept little, and that little was extremely disturbed. She often wished that she did not sleep at all.

“ I sat down by her, and after asking a few questions about her health, told her I had a letter from you, in which you said, that Mr. Orville had been so much distressed on hearing of her illness, that he had determined to come immediately to Altona. .

“ She made no reply.

“ I then said that he might be hourly expected. .

“ She drew aside a handkerchief that covered her face, and fixed her eye intently upon me for a moment,—but suddenly withdrawing it, averted her face. .

“ After a short silence, I told her, that I had got letters for her from you and Mrs. Almornc, and asked if she would read them ?

“ Yes, yes,” she replied quickly ; “ give me them ; they will be good and kind, and I shall

fancy myself again with them.—I wish," she added, "that I could once more see all the friends I have in England except——" She did not finish the sentence.

"When she opened the letters, she trembled so violently, that she could scarcely read them. The agitation the perusal of them threw her into, was excessive, but after some time she wept bitterly, and her countenance assumed an appearance of softer grief than I have seen it wear, since the commencement of her sufferings.

"She seemed however so much exhausted, that I did not think it would be safe to mention Ornaville's arrival for some time; but in a few minutes, she begged that she might know as soon as he arrived.

"I asked how she thought she would support the meeting with him?

"I know not," she replied, "but if he comes,——if he comes," she repeated, "bring him to me directly;—I can but die the sooner."

"I saw that she was afraid of his not coming;

and therefore thought it better to tell her without delay, but with caution, that he was arrived.

“ She looked at me wildly, and immediately fainted. For some time I thought that all was over.

“ When she recovered, she looked eagerly around the room, as if in search of an object that she did not see. Orville was at the door of her apartment, and I beckoned to him to approach. He did so, and, throwing himself on the sofa beside her, clasped her in his arms. She had just strength sufficient to throw her arms about his neck ;—but the agitation,—the tenderness of both, I cannot pretend to describe.

“ Neither her aunt nor I were able to remain in the room.

“ Fearful at length of fatal effects from such violent agitation, I returned, and begged that he would leave her for a time.

“ She said that she would be more composed, and entreated that I would not take him away. “ Long as I have lived without him,” she said,

"I think I should die immediately were I to lose him again."

"She raised herself on the sofa, that she might see him ; for she said that she had not yet seen him.

"She gazed on him earnestly, saying, that she now saw again all that angelic goodness, which had so completely won her heart.

"My dear Lydia," cried he, "do not torture me by such expressions ; I never was so good to you as I ought to have been."

"You were always," she replied, "much better than I deserved.—I see things now very differently from what I once did ; but I shall never trouble you more."

"If you wish not to destroy me, Lydia, you must forbear this language ; had I not forsaken you for the gaming-table, you would never have given me the smallest cause for uneasiness."

"It was not you," she replied, "that were to blame ; it was my brother ; he forced you

from home;—he was the cause of all my misfortunes—but of my happiness too,” she added, with a sweet, yet melancholy smile.

“ Say any thing,—any thing, Lydia,” he cried, in the extremest agitation, “ rather than smile upon me!—Let my heart be torn by your sorrow; kill me with your reproaches;—but, oh! do not,—do not smile upon me with such heavenly goodness!”

“ He appeared in such a transport of grief, that I insisted upon his leaving the room. She desired it herself, saying, that he ought to see his children, and that she was not able to witness their meeting.

“ I carried him into another apartment, where he threw himself on the floor in a state of distraction.

“ She is dying,” he cried, “ and I am the cause!—I have destroyed the most gentle, affectionate heart, that ever glowed in a human being!—How barbarous it was, when I knew how dependent she was upon me,—when her very

failings sprung only from the kindness of her heart !”

“ He seemed in such agonizing grief, that I thought it a proper moment to bring his sons. They could not render him more unhappy, and might, perhaps, soften his distresses..

“ The instant they saw him, they sprung to him, and hung upon his neck. He clasped them to his breast with the most rapturous fondness, while he faintly articulated, “ Dearest creatures, how could I ever think of parting from you !”

“ Their presence had the effect I wished. In a short time he became calmer, and I seized the opportunity to represent to him the necessity of governing his feelings before his wife. “ Peace of mind,” I said, “ could alone restore her to health, and it was impossible that she could be tranquil, if she saw him miserable.

“ He said that he would endeavour, as far as it was in his power, to command his feelings in her presence, and he did not disappoint me. When he returned to her, he preserved as much

firmness as I could well expect, although the struggle he sustained was great. She, too, appeared tranquillized. A soft joy seemed to beam through the melancholy of her appearance, for she was now but a sad remnant of her former self.

“ For some days, she appeared so well, that I considered her recovery as certain ; but the apprehensions of her physician, which had been great, did not decrease, and I discovered that she thought herself dying.

“ Ornvile never left her, except to visit her grandfather, and during the short intervals he allotted to meals ; but when he was absent, her aunt told me that she wept incessantly.—Upon hearing this, I seized the first moment that she was alone, to remonstrate against her indulgence of sorrow ; which, as there was now no cause for it, she ought to suppress for her husband’s sake, as well as her own.

“ I mourn,” she replied, because I must leave him.—Lately, I thought of death only as a consolation ; but now, I find it difficult to die.—Before his arrival, in the dark and silent

hours of night, the anguish which seized me was terrible!—from horror and despair I turned to death, as a blessed relief:—but now, when I find him always with me,—when I can pour out the affection with which my heart is filled, —and hear him in the tenderest language——”

“ She could not proceed ; convulsive sobs seemed to threaten the dissolution of her frame.

“ After some time, she recovered so far as to renew the conversation.

“ I have now,” she said, “ no fear for my children ; he will be a father to them, and Miss Ornvillc will be a mother :—but I fear he will suffer from believing that he has been unkind to me. Let him not think this. His behaviour has always been generous and tender ;—my esteem for him is perfect—my gratitude unbounded. Tell him this, when I am no more,—for well do I know his generous nature ; he will reproach himself for evils that could not be avoided.—Dreadful as it is to part from him, I yet feel blessed in receiving once more proofs of his tenderness, and in believing that he will

remember me, at least at this period, as not unworthy of his esteem."

"This conversation, she survived only a week. I was present when she died.—Her last moments were easy: she lay tranquilly for some time, supported by his arm, with her head resting upon his bosom.—I saw her press his hand in hers, and a few minutes after she expired.

"He could not be torn from her, till he was carried away in a state of delirium. For several days he did not undress, and would hardly be prevailed upon to taste food; his children alone seemed to recall him to life.

"For their sakes, he appears willing to exert himself; but their mother's death, of which he justly considers himself as the cause, has made an impression, which will for ever prevent his recovering perfect tranquillity. What a character is his for the misfortunes he has had to encounter!

"I have persuaded him to return immediately to England, whither I shall accompany him; for he is not in a state to travel alone. The sooner

he is with you the better : here he can only find nourishment to his grief : the society of his friends may soften it.

“ I inclose a letter to Miss Ornvill, which was written by his wife a few days before his arrival. In giving it to me, she expressed an earnest desire to be most gratefully remembered to Sir John and Lady Ornvill ; to you, and to Mrs. Almorne

“ Adieu, my dear friend ; believe me,

“ Most faithfully your’s,

Altona, Dec. 30.

“ FRANCIS ARMIGER.”

This letter could not be communicated to Sir John and Lady Ornvill ; but Mrs. Almorne informed them, in the gentlest manner, of the death of Lydia.

It proved a heavy addition to their affliction. They had been displeased with Frederic for his marriage, but her youth and amiable disposition prevented their feeling any disapprobation of her. As she advanced in years, their esteem

for her increased ; she likewise became endeared to them by their fondness for her children ; and they now lamented her death, both from their regard for herself, and from the severe loss which they considered it to her husband and family.

Mr Armiger's letter, Mrs. Almorne gave to Constantia. The sad fate of Lydia roused every amiable and tender feeling of her heart, and filled it with anguish. The afflictions she had hitherto met with, had either admitted hope of remedy, or were accompanied by some counteracting circumstance ; but here there was no hope ;—nor a single consolatory reflection that could mitigate the severity of the wound.

She had never before mourned the death of a youthful friend ; never lost a companion, in whose cares and joys she had participated, and to whom youth, health, and beauty, seemed to promise a long and happy life. She was shocked with the contemplation of life that now opened to her view, and death, with all its train of horrors, rose to her imagination, with that gloomy despair, which renders its first appearance to a young mind peculiarly affecting ; and

which religion alone has the power of alleviating.

The letter of Lydia to herself, contained the following lines:

“ I know you will be a mother to my children.—Forget not entirely her who gave them birth, and forgive her errors.

“ Next to my husband and children, you have long been the dearest object of my affection ; my last prayers will be for you, and for those, for whose happiness I die.”

“ LYDIA ORNVILLE.”

CHAPTER III.

OFTEN did Constantia read the last lines of Lydia, with floods of tears, and every moment that she passed alone, she indulged in sorrow to her memory ; but the state of her father and mother left little time at her disposal.

For some years, Sir John had been subject to fits of the gout, but they were neither frequent nor severe. He was now attacked by one which confined him to his apartment, without giving him much trouble.

Lady Orville attended him with great care and tenderness, and from anxiety to support his spirits, endeavoured to conceal her own sufferings, though his illness made her feel more severely the distresses which preyed upon her mind. Unsupported by his exertions, and thrown out of the ordinary routine of employ-

ments, which often gave a temporary check to her melancholy, her grief strengthened hourly, and she frequently retired to indulge it in private

Mrs Almorne and Constantia saw with much concern this inclination to solitude, and watched her steps with such vigilant care, that she was never permitted to remain more than a few minutes alone ; till one evening, being unusually overcome by the train of her melancholy reflections, she wandered to a remote and unfrequented part of the house, where she might give way undisturbed to the misery that oppressed her.

She had left Sir John's chamber but a few minutes, before Constantia followed in quest of her, but not finding her in any of the rooms she expected, she sought her for a considerable time through the various apartments of the Abbey, before she discovered her, sitting almost benumbed with cold. The room she had quitted was warm ; the one she had removed to, was, from the wetness of the weather, both cold and damp.

Constantia immediately prevailed upon her to leave it, and took every precaution to obviate the bad effects which might be dreaded from the sudden transition she had experienced ; but notwithstanding all her care, Lady Orville was seized with a cold, which for two days she concealed from her family.

She continued her attendance upon Sir John, without paying any attention to herself, except taking occasionally a few drops of hartshorn to support her spirits, and at night a dose of laudanum to procure sleep ; and on the third day was so ill as to be obliged to go to bed.

Doctor Welby was instantly sent for, who prescribed remedies, but at the same time acknowledged to Mrs. Almorne, that he thought her illness alarming. Her cold, he said, would probably have proved trifling, had it been properly attended to, but from neglect, it had now assumed an appearance that threatened fatal consequences.

Lady Orville herself seemed to think her illness dangerous, for she desired Lady Horndon to be sent for, that she might always have

one of her children with her, during the little time she had, perhaps, to live.

Constantia attended her till Lady Horndon's arrival, when Lady Ornvile desired that she would go to Sir John, and remain constantly with him. Constantia intreated that she might be permitted to continue with her, as her father did not require her assistance, and it would be sufficient for him, if she saw him occasionally.

But her mother persisted in her request, saying, if she regarded her peace, she must make her father the first object of her care; but desired that she would come often—very often, and see her.

Sir John, from whom it was impossible to conceal her illness a moment, was no less desirous that Constantia should be constantly with her mother, but when informed how anxious she was about him, he consented that Constantia should divide her time between them.

“Your mother, my dear,” he said, “was always most careful and affectionate when I was ill, and I would not now distress her by refus-

ing your attendance entirely ; but tell her that she will render me very unhappy, if she does not permit you to be much with her."

Lady Ornaville with some difficulty agreed to this, saying, she did it the more readily, as she believed her illness would not last long.

Till the next day there was little alteration in her disorder, but she then appeared sensibly worse.

Lady Horndon and Constantia sat now constantly by her bedside, and she frequently joined their hands in hers, desiring that they would be kind to, and love each other. She often inquired after their father with the most anxious solicitude, and conjured them to pay him every attention. She prayed for him fervently, and for all her children and grandchildren, and earnestly wished that she could see them.

She very frequently asked if Frederic and his sons were arrived, and expressed much anxiety for their safety ; but the mention of them always brought Philip with fresh agitation to her remembrance. Whenever she bid Constantia

be careful of Frederic's children, which she often did, she added, "be good to Melfont's."

As she grew worse, she thought of her husband and children with increasing anxiety ;—she often called upon them, with the most affecting expressions of tenderness, and repeatedly spoke of Philip with a sorrow which seemed to overwhelm her ;—she implored her daughters to let her again see her dear Philip when he was a boy,—"Bring me," she cried, "my little Philip, as he was at seven years old——"

In the evening she grew so ill, that she could not articulate, and at midnight, after many struggles, expired.

Constantia clung to the lifeless form of her mother, and could with difficulty be separated from her. The grief and tenderness of her sister drew her at length away, and for some time they indulged their affliction in the arms of each other.

The distress of Lady Horndon was great, but the sufferings of Constantia were far more severe, and rendered Mrs. Almorne unwilling to restrain the effusions of her grief till the morning was far advanced, when she reminded her, that it was near the time her father would expect her, and, for his sake, she hoped that she would command her feelings.

At the sound of his name she was calmed ; her countenance retained the traces of sorrow, but her manner became composed, for all consideration of herself was lost in anxiety for him.

At an early hour he sent for her. Mrs Almorne inquired of the servant if Sir John knew of Lady Orville's death, and was told he did not, for though he had frequently asked after her, his attendants knowing at midnight that she could not long survive, avoided informing themselves farther, that he might remain ignorant till the return of day.

Mrs. Almorne, sensible that the event could no longer be concealed from him, accompanied

Constantia to his apartment, believing that her presence might be of service to both.

Sir John cast his eyes eagerly towards them as they drew near his bed. "My wife is worse!" he exclaimed; but when Mrs. Almorne, without answering, put Constantia's hand in his, "She is gone!" he faintly articulated, and sunk upon the bed. He hid his face from their view, but betrayed no other sign of sorrow.

Mrs. Almorne and Constantia sat in silence by his bed-side, and, but for the solemn stillness which reigned in the house, it could not have been known for the place of mourning.

CHAPTER IV.

ON Mrs. Almorne's returning to Lady Horndon, she found her with Sir Robert, who had come to inquire after Lady Orville, and was, with much concern, endeavouring to console his wife.

Lady Horndon expressed an earnest desire to see her father, if Mrs. Almorne thought their meeting would not be injurious to him.

Mrs. Almorne believed it would rather be beneficial, as she imagined nothing could soften his affliction more than the presence of the members of his family in whom he was yet happy.

She conducted Lady Horndon to his chamber, and, approaching him softly, said, that Lady Horndon earnestly wished to be permitted to see him.

He raised himself immediately, and held out his hand to his daughter, who threw her arms about his neck, and wept upon his bosom.

He appeared deeply affected, but for some time did not speak; then, addressing her, he said, "My dear child, your tenderness is consolatory to me, but the indulgence of grief is not good for you; you must remember your husband and children, and take care of yourself.—Return to your family to-day, and let me see you again to-morrow. The sight of your children will soften your grief, and you will teach them by your goodness, to love and respect you, and be to you dutiful and affectionate, as you ever were to your mother."

Lady Horndon took leave of him, and returned with Mrs. Almorne to Sir Robert.

On the first apprehension of Lady Ornaville's danger, Mrs. Almorne wrote to Mr. Hanway of it, and requested, if Frederic was returned, and able to bear the journey, that he would immediately come to Ornaville, and bring his sons with him. She believed that his presence would be of the greatest service to his family, and

hoped the exertion he would be under the necessity of making, upon their account, would be beneficial to himself,

She now received a letter from Mr Hanway, informing her that he had been on the point of writing to let her know of Frederic's safe arrival, when he received her letter, and that she might expect him immediately at the Abbey.

She carried Mr. Hanway's letter instantly to Sir John, to whom it afforded much satisfaction. It relieved him, he said, of great anxiety about Frederic, and the prospect of seeing him was one of the greatest consolations he could receive.

He then desired her to take Constantia away, that she might not suffer by being too much with him; but Constantia declaring that she should be infinitely worse if they were separated, and Mrs. Almorne agreeing with her, he consented to her remaining.

CHAPTER V.

THE next day Frederic arrived. Mrs. Almorne received him alone, and with all the firmness she could assume; but he was so much overcome, that she was wholly unable to address him.

When he spoke, it was to make inquiries about his mother, of whose death he had been informed before he entered the house.

She answered his questions with the minuteness he seemed to wish, but when he discovered the causes to which his mother's illness and death might be attributed, he grasped her hand with the strongest emotion, and exclaimed, "Gracious God! what do I not owe to you! — Had it not been for the empire which your virtues have given you over me, I too might have had a share in the destruction of my mo-

ther; and the remorse I suffer on account of the generous being I have destroyed, would have been——”

He stopt and hurried out of the room.— Mrs. Almorne would not immediately intrude upon his sorrow by following him, but after some time she went to him in the next apartment, whither he had retired.—He had thrown himself upon the floor, but on her entrance, he hastily arose, and advancing towards her, said that he wished to see his father, about whom he anxiously inquired.

When Mrs. Almorne had given him the information he desired, she added, “ You have so much cause to be reconciled to yourself, my dear Frederic, that I cannot, without the utmost regret, see the distress you suffer; show me that you will, at this moment; allow your father’s sorrows to predominate over yours.”

She then left him to prepare his father to receive him, but she was not a minute absent; for Sir John no sooner heard of his arrival, than he desired to see him.

Their meeting was extremely affectionate, but less melancholy than Mrs. Almorne expected. Frederic summoned all his fortitude, and his father appeared to acquire spirit from the sight of him. He said that he felt his presence a consolation and support, which he stood greatly in need of.

He cast, however, a sorrowful look on the sable dress of Frederic, saying, "I grieve, my son, for the loss you have sustained, far more than for my own; my days are nearly over—I shall soon follow your mother."

Seeing Frederic much affected, he condemned himself for what he had said, and endeavoured to suggest soothing ideas by asking after his sons.

Being told they had come with him, he desired to see them, and when they were brought, he kissed them with great affection, and having blessed them, said, "sweet boys! you little know this world of sorrow you are entering, but you are fortunate in a father, who will ever prove a faithful friend and guardian."

These words carried Frederic precipitately

to the other end of the room, when Mrs. Almorne took the opportunity to whisper Sir John, that he could not at present, bear the mention of his wife and children.

“Bring him back then,” he replied, “and I will talk to him only of business.”

When he returned, “my dear Frederic,” said his father, “to you I commit those cares, which should have been mine, had my health permitted it; you will do every thing as I could wish. Write to your brothers, that they may come here if they please; but do not let me see them;—they have killed their mother!”——

A long silence ensued, which was broken by Sir John’s saying to his son, “my friend, this is not the way to comfort you, but I trust that you will support us all. Take Mrs. Almorne and Constantia away; they require rest and refreshment, and a few hours hence, I shall see you again.”

They objected much to leaving him, but he earnestly desired to be alone, and promised to recall them soon.

They retired, and about two hours after Dr. Welby arrived, whom Frederic accompanied to his father's apartment.

Sir John received the Doctor, who was his highly esteemed friend, with apparent tranquillity, and said he imagined that he was much better than he expected.

Dr. Welby replied, that he believed his son was the best physician for him at present, nevertheless, he must request that he might be kept as tranquil as possible.

"I am so much of your opinion, Sir," rejoined Sir John, "that when you came, I was just going to send for my family to wish them good night. I beg that you will do me the favour to make them take some care of themselves, and leave me entirely to yours."

Frederic entreated that he would permit him to pass the night in his apartment, but Sir John would not consent to it, and made him promise that he would go early to bed, to recover the fatigue of his journey.

CHAPTER VI.

EARLY in the morning, Constantia stole unperceived to the apartment where her mother lay, to which Mrs. Almorne had denied her access the night before.

She knelt beside the corpse, and bathing it with her tears, gave unbounded way to her sorrow.—For a long time, she was so overwhelmed with grief, as to be incapable of reflection,—but recovering in some degree, she contemplated with wonder the awful change a few hours had produced,—a change which she had never before seen.

Soon, however, hurried away by the violence of her affliction, she fancied the whole a delusion, and wildly called upon her mother to answer to her voice. But those accents, which had once had so powerful an influence over her

mother, could be heard by her no more. That countenance, which she had been accustomed to behold with such melting tendernefs,—to see beaming with kindnefs, and testifying all a mother's fondnefs,—was now cold and inanimate—insensible to every feeling !

Absorbed in grief, Constantia did not perceive the entrance of Mrs. Almorne, who stood for some minutes silently observing her. She then advanced, and taking her gently by the hand, said that her father had been inquiring for her.

Constantia instantly rose, and was led away by Mrs. Almorne. Upon asking how her father did, she was told that he had passed a sleepless night, and had been impatient for the time when he expected to see her, but would not permit her to be called at an earlier hour.

She stopt a moment to compose herself, and then went to his chamber, where she was instantly struck with the change which had taken place in his appearance. He seemed pale, feeble, and many years older than he had been the preceding day, although his aspect was more serene, than she had long seen it.

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"How sweet are you to me, my love," said he, as she approached, and took the hand, which he held out to her;—"the soft sound of your steps, brings peace to my troubled mind. You have the power of giving me a delight, which even your death could not wholly deprive me of, for I should still remember what you were, and be rich in the remembrance!"

Constantia threw herself on the bed, and clasped him in her arms;—her emotions testified unutterable sensations.

"Compose yourself, my beloved child," said he, "I can bear my own sorrows, but not yours."

She endeavoured to calm her feelings, and had soon the satisfaction to see her father restored to the serene state in which she had found him, while he still tenderly expressed the comfort she afforded him.

Dr. Welby and Frederic entered, while her countenance yet betrayed the agitation she had been under. (The former addressing her father, said, "I fear, Sir, that Miss Ornvill is

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not so good a nurse as could be wished, and I must administer to you both, by strictly enjoining her not to risque injuring you, by such affecting behaviour."

"It was my fault, Sir," replied Sir John, "and it shall not happen again. Take her away, Frederic; this place is not good for her."

Constantia immediately withdrew, making a sign to her brother to remain.

When Dr. Welby left Sir John, he told Mrs. Almorne before Constantia, that it was absolutely necessary he should be kept as free from agitation as possible, as the distress of mind he had suffered, with want of sleep and of sustenance, had produced a state of debility, the consequences of which, if not carefully guarded against, might be fatal.

This was more than sufficient to prevent Constantia from again betraying her feelings before her father. She returned to him composed, and soon after, Mrs. Almorne and Frederic came into the room, and sat down near him without speaking.

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After some time paused in silence, Sir John, looking at them with a serious, but placid countenance, thus addressed them :

“ Let not what I am going to say, my friends, distress you. My death will not be accelerated by my being prepared for it, and it is fit that I should leave nothing undone, which can contribute to render it peaceful.—Listen, therefore, to the few words that I have to say without uneasiness, for I may live long with you ; but as I must die, and perhaps unexpectedly, I will now mention what I should be sorry to leave unsaid.

My pecuniary affairs are entirely settled ; I have no directions to give about them ; I have only to wish, Frederic, that your dear boys may inherit my property.—We little imagine what is to befall us !——A few years ago, I could not have believed it possible, that I should one day rejoice in the prospect of Hastings having no children,—yet so it is.”

“ I wish,” resumed Sir John, after a pause, “ to live, and hope I shall still live, to see you, Constantia, the wife of Valmonsor ; but though I should not have that happiness, I trust that

you will never be in any respect disappointed in the expectations which I have formed of him. In the mean while, you, Frederic, will be a father to her, and she will, as far as it is in her power, supply to your children the loss of their mother.

“In whatever situation you are placed, my children, remember that you owe more to Mrs. Almorne for her disinterested kindness,—her unwearied exertions for your welfare, than you ever did to me.—She has been a mother to you both, and will, I know, continue to regard you with parental care.—You cannot love her too much; you cannot honour her too highly,—to respect her, is to respect virtue.”

Sir John ceased, and Mrs. Almorne was attempting to speak, when, with a benevolent smile, as if he perfectly understood what she would say, he made a sign to her to be silent, and she complied.

Frederic and Constantia dared not trust their voices to reply, but their countenances were sufficiently expressive.

CHAPTER VII.

ON the return of Dr. Welby in the afternoon, he found Sir John considerably worse, and he confessed to Mrs. Almorne, that he thought his state alarming. The gout, he said, had attacked him in the most favourable manner before Lady Ornaville's death; but from the situation into which he had since been thrown, it now appeared to be disordering his whole frame, and, he feared, would terminate fatally.

The Doctor's opinion proved but too just.— Sir John became gradually worse for two days, and, after suffering severe pain, upon the third

day fell into a state of insensibility, in which he continued till the next morning at one o'clock, when he expired.

This heavy stroke overcame the firmness even of Mrs. Almorne.—Dr. Welby seemed at first the only person capable of recollection. He had Constantia, who was nearly as insensible as her father, carried to her apartment; he conducted Mrs. Almorne and Frederic from the scene of their affliction, and did every thing in his power to soften their distress, and awaken their fortitude.

He succeeded with the first by exciting her concern for Miss Orville, and with the latter, by reminding him of the duties he had to perform.

Mrs. Almorne went to the chamber of Constantia, whom she found lying on her bed, not insensible, but perfectly quiet. After remain-

ing with her a few minutes, she left her to the care of her maid, and returned to the apartment of her revered friend, to see that he was attended in the manner she wished.

This sad duty fulfilled, she returned to Constantia, who still remained quiet, and, sitting down by her, resolved to watch her till the return of day.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW hours made no change in the state of Constantia. She appeared sunk in a lethargy of wo, from which Mrs. Almorne did not wish to awake her, believing that she suffered less from it, than she would do in any other way in which her affliction could affect her.

At eight o'clock, she received a message from Dr. Welby to inquire after her and Constantia, as he was going to leave Ornvile, but would return in the evening, accompanied by Mrs. Welby, whose presence, he hoped, might be of service to her and Miss Ornvile.

Mrs. Almorne answered his inquiries, adding that she had intended to request the favour of Mrs. Welby's company, which would afford much consolation to her and the family. She

then made inquiries after Frederic, and was informed that he was employed in answering a letter he had just received by express from his eldest brother.

Anxious to know the contents of the letter, she went to him immediately, and upon her entering the room, he said, "Here is a letter from Hastings' servant, Nelson, written at his master's desire to inform me, that he has been taken so ill on his way here, as to be obliged to stop at Canterbury. He hopes to proceed on his journey in a day or two, but in the meanwhile is anxious to know how my father does.—I have written the little that is necessary in reply, and have desired his instructions respecting things here, till he is able to come to himself."

"I shall not be sorry," replied Mrs. Almerne, "if his illness should detain him at Canterbury till the funeral is over. I wish you and Constantia to be out of this house before he comes to it, and I shall take her away the moment your father's Will has been read."

Frederic made no answer, but a minute after, taking a letter from a heap of papers which lay

on a table, he said, "This is a letter from Philip; he says, as my father is ill, he is unwilling to come to Ornaville, for he does not suppose he wishes to see him at present, and his being here without seeing him, would be very unpleasant."

"I shall not regret his absence either," said Mrs. Almorne; "his presence could afford no satisfaction to you, and would be very painful to his sister."

"How is she?"

"In a torpid state, which is the best her situation admits of. She suffers severely, but in a few days she will be far more unhappy; misery has, in some degree, benumbed her faculties at present."

"How severe is misery!"

"It is, my friend;—but it is peculiarly sad, that you, who are so young, should know its language."

"Many, who are younger than I, have never known another."

“ True ; and it is even misery to know this : age and affliction are natural companions, but it is grievous to see the young suffering calamity.”

“ There is no remedy for the affliction of old or young but employment ; we must force ourselves to it.”

“ I am glad,” said Mrs. Almorne, casting her eye on the table, “ that you have got occupation.”

“ Yes, I have many letters to write, but most of those you see, are only inquiries about my father, which came this morning. The answer will be felt by many.”

“ It will, ‘ for rarely will they see his like again.’—Seldom will be found such abilities and cultivation of mind,—with a judgment which no feeling could warp from reason or justice. Yet, to Roman virtue he united the tenderest of hearts !—‘ He envied no man’s comforts,—insulted no man’s opinions,—blackened no man’s character :—for each man’s need he had a heart open ;—for each one’s sorrow, a tear.’”

CHAPTER IX.

FREDERIC soon received an answer from Hastings, in which he requested that he would take the sole charge of the funeral, order every thing as he thought proper, and be guided by his own judgment in every respect, as completely as if he were himself his father's heir and representative. He said, that his health was in so precarious a state, that the funeral ought not to be a moment delayed upon his account, but if he was able he would be at Ornaville upon the day of the interment.

This answer gave much satisfaction to Mrs. Almorne, who saw from it, that there was no danger of his coming before the day of the funeral, and very little of his coming at all. Since his health was in a precarious state, he would not choose to expose himself to cold or fatigue

but would probably return to London as soon as he was able to travel.

Frederic fixed the day of interment for that day se'nnight, that his brother might have some previous time for recovery, and proceeded to act in other respects as he thought right.

Sir Robert Horndon passed much time with him, offering his assistance wherever it could be useful, and showing every attention in his power to the family.

During the three last days of Sir John's life, Lady Horndon had constantly attended him till the evening before he died, when Sir Robert, thinking her presence could no longer be useful, and might be prejudicial to herself, carried her home; and, at the desire of Mrs. Almorne, prevented her returning till her sister should be more able to see her.

For two days Constantia continued in a state of apparent insensibility, which Mrs. Almorne was unwilling to interrupt. Mrs. Welby, who had long been the intimate friend of the family, was constantly with her; and though Mrs.

Almorne passed much time with Frederic, no hour elapsed in which she did not come to Constantia's apartment to inquire after her.

On the morning of the third day, Constantia suddenly, as if awakening from a deep sleep, begged that she might be permitted to see her father.

Mrs. Almorne was very unwilling to grant her request, but her solicitations were so urgent, that she could not oppose them, and she conducted her to the apartment where the corpse lay;—but no sooner had Constantia advanced to it, and seen the veil withdrawn that covered the face, than, with a look of undescrivable anguish, she sunk into the arms of Mrs. Almorne, and was carried, without offering any opposition, back to her apartment.

It was then that Mrs. Almorne saw her begin to feel her misfortune in all its poignancy. She threw herself on the floor in a frenzy of sorrow, and the violence of her emotions was such as almost to render Mrs. Almorne incapable of attempting to console her.

She continued in this state till the evening, when the intreaties of Mrs. Almorne produced an appearance of calmness; but she would not be prevailed upon to lie down. She implored Mrs. Almorne to permit her to pass the night in sitting or walking; declaring that any state was preferable, to the horror of awakening from sleep, to the sense of her misery.

Mrs. Almorne knew that there was one way of governing her feelings,—exciting her concern for others, and in the morning she told her that she hoped she would now endeavour to support her spirits for the sake of her brother, who was far more unhappy than herself.—Nothing, she said, could be more consolatory to him than her company, if she could meet him with composure. He had often expressed an earnest desire to see her, which she had discouraged from fearing her situation would aggravate his affliction; but if she would now return to him, with a resolution to command her feelings, she was persuaded their meeting would be a consolation to both.—“Need I add, my beloved Constantia, how much it would afflict me, to see you sink under distress?”

"Enough, my dear Madam," said Constantia, ardently pressing the hand of Mrs. Almorne, "you shall see that I do not forget the lessons you have taught me."

"Come then, my love," replied Mrs. Almorne, "let me now conduct you to your brother."

Upon saying this, she took her by the hand, and led her down stairs. Believing that Frederic was in the yellow drawing-room, she conducted her thither; but no sooner did Constantia enter it, than she started back, as if seized with sudden horror, and giving a shriek, flew with precipitation to another room, where she found her brother with Sir Robert and Lady Horndon and Mrs. Welby.

Their presence calmed her, and she passed the rest of the day with as much firmness as Mrs. Almorne could desire. Her sister had come to spend some days at the Abbey, and her mere presence was a comfort to Constantia, while the endeavours of Sir Robert to keep up conversation with Mrs. Almorne and Mrs. Welby, joined to the innocent playfulness of Fre-

deric's sons, insensibly lessened the gloom which hung over the minds of the family.

Constantia did not attempt to enter into conversation, but she sometimes attended to what was said, and always behaved with composure. But her attention was chiefly excited by her nephews. She pressed them to her heart as a sacred deposit from their mother,—and in the attentions she paid to them,—in the caresses she bestowed upon them, she found a sweet, yet sad consolation.

For several days, however, Mrs. Almorne observed, that she often withdrew for a short time, and returned with her eyes red and swelled; and she was much surprised upon discovering, that the place to which she constantly retired, was the room from which she had fled so precipitately the first day that she came down stairs.

One morning having remained in it unusually long, Mrs. Almorne was led by anxiety to follow her, and found her kneeling before a sofa, bathed in tears. She sat down by her, and tenderly inquired, why she came hither so often,

and chose this particular spot for the place of her mourning ?

“ It was here,” replied Constantia, in a voice scarcely articulate,—“ it was here on this sofa, that I was lately folded in the arms of my father and mother, and wondered how I could ever have been unhappy when blest with such parents !—I still see their angelic forms,—still hear their pure spirits—and feel that the highest delight I can ever know is in doing them homage !”

Mrs. Almorne wept over Constantia, and for some time they mingled their tears together ; but when Mrs. Almorne had removed her to another apartment, and saw her again composed, she entreated that she would oblige her by forbearing so dangerous an indulgence. “ I grieve, my sweet Constantia,” she said, “ to impose any painful restraint upon you, but I fear that sorrow, if encouraged, may enervate your mind, and injure your health ; and I wish you to command that fortitude, which will preserve you for the comfort of those you love, and fit you for the important part, which, I hope, you have to act in life.”

"I know not," replied Constantia, "what may yet await me, but I feel as if in the midst of a dark and heavy cloud, through which the beams of the sun can never pass."

"Your feelings, my love, are natural, and far should I be from calling your attention at present to prospects of futurity that regard only yourself; but there is one view I may suggest to your consideration, because it comes recommended by every generous feeling. You must be sensible how much Valmonsor may suffer from his separation from you, and the miserable uncertainty in which his prospects are involved; and you cannot reflect on this, without feeling satisfaction in the hope of relieving him from so unhappy a state. In a short time your father's Will must be read; your fortune will then be known, and Valmonsor will no longer fear the obstacles to your union, which he has hitherto dreaded;—he will return, and in uniting yourself to him, you will fulfil the last wishes of your father."

Constantia sighed deeply, and pressed the hand of Mrs. Alnornc, without offering any reply.

CHAPTER X

WHEN the day fixed for the funeral arrived, Hastings was unable to attend. Philip also was absent, pleading as his apology the painfulness of meeting, for a short time only, with his family, upon so melancholy an occasion.

The funeral was conducted with the utmost simplicity; the deep grief of the mourners was the only circumstance by which it was distinguished.

Constantia did not know when it took place, Mrs. Almorne having contrived to keep her ignorant till it was over; she only knew that it was over, by being told that her father's papers were to be opened immediately in the presence of Mrs Almorne, her brother Frederic, Sir Robert Herndon, Mr. Edgeworth, and Mr. Wil-

ber, an attorney of Canterbury, whom her eldest brother had sent to attend the opening of the Will.

Mrs. Welby had been obliged to return home two days before, and Lady Horndon having left Ornvile the preceding evening, Constantia shut herself up in her own apartment, that she might be remote from hearing any thing of a business which spoke so painfully the reality of her misfortune.—She had no curiosity about the particulars of the Will, for she was certain that every part of her father's testament would be liberal and just.

The hour appointed for the business was twelve, and four o'clock came without her having thought upon the subject, but she was then surprised that she did not see Mrs. Almorne; and when five passed without hearing of her, she became so anxious, that she was going to make inquiries, when Mrs. Almorne came to conduct her to dinner.

She apologized for her long absence by saying, she had been engaged with Mr. Edgeworth, who, with Sir Robert, was still in the house; and added, that as she had still some business

to speak of to Edgeworth, she should not object to her retiring soon after dinner.

Constantia accompanied her to the dining-room, without making any inquiries, and soon after the cloth was removed, she withdrew to her apartment, where she remained till Mrs. Almorne sent a servant to request her company to tea.

She found Mrs. Almorne and her brother alone, who talked of indifferent subjects, without once mentioning the business in which they had been engaged ; but she could not help observing in the course of the evening, that they often appeared strangely absent, and had a very peculiar expression of countenance.

She forbore, however, to make inquiries, and the night passed without her discovering the cause of their altered behaviour, which, to her apprehension, became every moment more visible.

In the morning at breakfast, Mrs. Almorne and Frederic talked so much, and so fast upon a subject in which they were interested, that

she had no opportunity of inquiring about the transactions of the preceding day ; and as soon as breakfast was over, Mrs. Almorne begged she would excuse the being left alone during the morning, as she was to be engaged with Mr. Edgeworth. Constantia immediately retired, and remained alone, till she was told by a servant that dinner waited.

She found Mr. Edgeworth with Mrs. Almorne and her brother. During dinner they talked of trifling matters, but very soon after it, she received a hint from Mrs. Almorne to retire.

She was recalled to tea at a very late hour, when this evening passed as the preceding one, except that both Mrs. Almorne and Frederic appeared still more silent and absent.

She was now convinced that something extraordinary had occurred, but she had not courage to demand an explanation, which they seemed so little inclined to give ; she parted from them without receiving any solution of the mystery, and during a sleepless night formed many fruitless conjectures as to the cause of

a behaviour, which appeared equally unaccountable and alarming.

Early in the morning, Lady Horndon came to see her, and, upon their being left alone, she acknowledged her suspicions, and begged to know if they were just?

Lady Horndon looked at her sorrowfully, but made no answer.

Constantia earnestly repeated her question.

With a look of mingled pity and kindness, her sister took her affectionately by the hand.

"I entreat," said Constantia, "that you will tell me, if I am not mistaken."

"I must confess," said Lady Horndon, "that you are not; but I am sorry you have discovered it, since they have not thought proper to tell you."

"Would to heaven!" cried Constantia, "they would not leave me in this state of uncertainty."

"It would be wrong," replied Lady Horn-
don, "to keep you in suspense ; since you must
know soon, I shall go and request Mrs. Almor-
ne to tell you immediately,"

"Must know soon !" repeated Constantia, as
her sister quitted the room,—“ what strange
evil is coming upon me !”

Lady Horn-
don was not long in returning
with Mrs. Almor-
ne, who address-
ing Constan-
tia in the kindest manner, said, “ I have been
unwilling, my dear, to discover to you the cause
of our uneasiness these two days, because I
hoped it would be over before you had any sus-
picion of it ; but as your sister tells me that
concealment can no longer be of service, I shall
now——”

Mrs. Almor-
ne stopt,—but after pausing a
moment, she proceeded ; “ It is a very extraor-
dinary circumstance that you have to hear of,
and one which at first must try you severely,—
but the evil is not irremediable, and I trust that
you will bear it with all the fortitude I could
wish.”

Again Mrs. Almorne paused, and Constantia looked at her fearfully without daring to speak.

"You must be very much astonished," resumed Mrs. Almorne, "when I tell you, that we have not been able to find your father's Will."

"Not find it! repeated Constantia, amazed; do I hear aright?"

Mrs. Almorne's countenance too plainly answered in the affirmative.

"The strictest search has no doubt been made?"

"It has," returned Mrs. Almorne, "and though hitherto in vain, I cannot believe that it is lost."

Constantia gazed alternately on her sister, and Mrs. Almorne for a minute, but becoming faint, her head sunk on the shoulder of Lady Herndon.

Recovering in a few moments, she said, "I trust, my dear Madam, you do not think it is for myself alone that I am thus affected?"

" I knew, my dear, it is not, and I hope that every cause of your regret will be removed by the recovery of the Will ; but should it be lost, let me assure you, that nothing shall be left undone by me, which can in the smallest degree contribute to your happiness."

" I will never, my generous friend, be a burden on you."

" Can you, Constantia, for a moment suppose that your happiness is not mine ?"

" Nor must you," said Lady Horndon, warmly, " imagine that my peace can be separated from yours ; it will be my happiness, my ever loved sister, to contribute to yours ; and I have been enjoined by Sir Robert, to entreat that you will do us the favour to make Elbourne your home. Need I say how much my heart delights in a request, which I am sure has been made from his ?"

" How very grateful is your kindness, my dear Fanny," replied Constantia, emphatically : — " But tell me," continued she, after a short pause, " why you think the Will may be reco-

vered, or rather tell me how it can be lost ; for still I can scarcely believe it ?”

“ We have not been more easy of belief than yourself,” said Mrs. Almorne ; “ but I shall give you all the information in my power.

Your father’s cabinet was sealed about two hours after his death by Frederic in the presence of Dr. Welby, and the seals remained untouched, till they were broken by Mr. Edgeworth before Sir Robert, Frederic, Wilber, and myself. You may imagine our astonishment, when, after the strictest search, no Will could be found. Mr. Edgeworth declared he had drawn one which he had seen deposited in the cabinet, and I also said, that I had lately read a Will, which was drawn by him. Your brother suggested the looking for it elsewhere, which was done. Every repository, in which there was a possibility of finding it, was explored in vain.—The question then was, what had become of it ; but to this every one was at a loss to reply, till Wilber said, the matter could only be explained by supposing that Sir John had destroyed it, with the intention of making another, which his unexpected death had prevented.

Edgeworth thought this impossible, as your

father had lately added a codicil to his Will, without hinting the smallest intention of making another. I confirmed this opinion, by mentioning that your father had, on his death-bed, declared that his pecuniary affairs were settled. Edgeworth thought this circumstance alone was sufficient to evince that he had not destroyed his Will; and added, that he had always been so remarkable for distinctness and attention to business, that it was impossible he could have neglected or made any mistake in so important a concern. He therefore hoped the Will would be found; but if by any accident it had been lost, he had a scroll of it at home, which he would produce for the satisfaction of the family;—or rather, said he, I shall instantly write the particulars of it from memory, and, if Mrs. Almoré thinks them correct, and the scroll in my house, which I shall immediately deliver to Mr. Wilber, be found to confirm my deposition from memory, little doubt will remain to Sir Hastings of the intentions of his respected father, which I dare say he will gladly fulfil.

Sir Robert requested that he would immediately commit the particulars of the Will to paper, and while he was doing so, I likewise noted them down, as well as I could remember them.

When we had finished, our accounts were found to agree, upon which Wilber was desired to carry both to your brother, and inform him of what had happened. He immediately set out for Canterbury, and yesterday returned at the hour he had appointed to meet with Sir Robert and Mr. Edgeworth here.

He told us that your brother had expressed the utmost surprise at his father's having left no Will, which could only be accounted for by supposing he had destroyed the one he had made, from having on reflection disapproved of it; and that his sudden illness had prevented his making another. This supposition, he thought, was not rendered improbable by your father's having declared on his death-bed, that his pecuniary affairs were settled, as it was easy to imagine his memory might fail him at a moment in which his mind was so extremely disturbed, and his body debilitated. But whatever might be the cause of his neglecting to leave a Will, he should be happy to make some compensation to the legatees for the failure, though it could not reasonably be expected that he would make the donations so large as Mr. Edgeworth had stated them to be. He said that you were not entirely unprovided for, but he should be glad to make

such an addition to the legacy left you by Lady Anson, as your friends thought proper, and at the same time hoped that you would make his house your home.

Neither your brother, nor Sir Robert seemed fond of replying to all this, and therefore I took upon me to say, that it was impossible to suppose your father had destroyed his Will, as he was perfectly sensible and recollected, when he had affirmed that his affairs were settled; and that however it had been lost, it would be proper to be assured it was irrecoverably gone, before Sir Hastings should determine what ought to be done for the legatees.

When Wilber left us, Sir Robert said, that were it possible to suppose there was any person desirous of destroying the Will, he should think it had been stolen from your father's cabinet during the last hours of his life.

"Ambrose Doyley," said Edgeworth, "Sir John's old servant who constantly attended him, was a witness to the Will, and saw it deposited in the cabinet; I should like to converse with him upon the subject: perhaps he may throw some light upon it."

I immediately proposed that he should be sent for, and interrogated, but Frederic said

that he had been taken ill two days ago, and had requested leave to go to his own house, which he granted.

Edgeworth asked where his house was, and said he would go to it, and upon being told that it was at Molton, about two miles from Ornvile, he determined to go there last night, and return here early this morning, to inform us of the event of his inquiry. He is not yet come, which surprises me greatly, and I only waited the result of his visit to Ambrose, before I made you acquainted with the affair."

"I have no hope of discovery," said Constantia; "for whoever has stolen the Will, must be too much aware of the importance of concealment, to leave any avenue open to detection."

"There can be no doubt," said Lady Horn-don, "that the Will has been stolen; but I think it very possible that circumstances may lead to a discovery."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a servant to inform Mrs. Almorne, that Mr. Edgeworth was arrived.

As soon as she had left the room, Constantia asked her sister, if she could tell her the particulars of the Will?

"Most of them," she replied. "It entitled you to fourteen thousand pounds; Philip to twenty; Frederic to two; each of his sons to four; and myself to nine. There was likewise eight thousand pounds in legacies to others, and five hundred pounds per annum in annuities to indigent persons who have been dependent on his bounty. Its disappearance is a very extraordinary affair; but whatever becomes of it, my beloved sister, I trust I shall have the happiness of seeing you make Elbourne your home."

"I shall ever think your society one of my first comforts," said Constantia; "and if I do not reside with you so much as you may expect, be assured it can be owing neither to want of affection, or insensibility to your goodness."

"I can never suspect you of indifference," replied Lady Horndon; "but I fear that Mrs. Almorne will monopolize you. Reflect, however, Constantia, that you have ever been one of the greatest blessings of my life, and that you

ought not to deny me some opportunity of showing my gratitude as well as my affection."

"You owe me nothing, my dear Fanny, but affection, and in this our obligations are mutual. For some time, I believe that I must reside with Mrs. Almoré. You know that I owe her filial duty; and before she knew of this last misfortune, she told me that she expected I would, in a few days, go with her to Delvin Lodge, and make it my principal home. I am, however, too confused at present to know what ought to be my future plans, and it may be some time before I can decide them."

"I shall forbear, then, to press the subject farther, but trust your future determinations will be kind."

"I request you will, in the meanwhile, make proper acknowledgments for me to Sir Robert for his kindness;—and ask him where are now those sanguine hopes, which he entertained for me in May?"

"Your prospects will brighten; Sir Robert

says, he cannot believe that fortune will desert you."

"The smiles of fortune are never to be trusted, and happy are they whose minds are early trained to place no dependence upon them !"

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. ALMORNE found Sir Robert and Frederick with Mr. Edgeworth.

“I have been prevented, Madam,” said the latter upon her entrance, “from waiting upon you so soon as I intended, by not being able to see Ambrose Doyley till this morning. When I went to his house last night, I was told that he was too ill to be spoken with. I inquired about his disorder, and was informed it was the cramp in his stomach. I asked if he had medical aid? No; he thought it unnecessary, as he expected he should soon get better. I advised his wife to send for a physician, and left the house without troubling her farther.

This morning I returned, and was told that he was worse. I asked if he had yet had medical advice? His wife replied, that he would

not be prevailed upon to have any, as he thought nature the best doctor.

I told her that I would talk to him upon the subject, if she would permit me to see him.

She said, that it was quite unnecessary to give myself any trouble, as her husband would take his own way. I desired however that I might see him for a few minutes, as I had business of importance to speak of. She declared that it was impossible to trouble him. I persisted in my request ; and as I grew more importunate, she became embarrassed, and opposed my design with such anxiety and evident confusion, as determined me to attempt seeing him without her consent.

I left her abruptly, and went up stairs to a chamber, where I found him in bed. The curtains were open, and I instantly saw his countenance, which had not the appearance of sickness, but of misery. The moment he saw me, he gave a frightful stare, and suddenly averted his face.

I sat down by him, and made some inquiries about his health, to which he gave no answer.

I then told him I must trouble him with a few questions, and proceeded to acquaint him with the loss of the Will. He kept his face

turned from me, but lay quiet, till I asked if he could give me any information respecting it? He then removed himself farther from me, but did not speak. I desired him to know if he had lately seen it in the hands of Sir John, or had heard him mention it?—Still he was silent. I represented the great injury the younger members of the family sustained by the loss of the Will, and conjured him by the regard he had for his old master and benefactor, to say if he could give the least intelligence about it.

He answered only by a deep groan.

I expressed the greatest surprise at his silence, and urged him by every moral and religious duty to answer. He turned, and twisted himself numberless ways, but still persevered in silence.

I coaxed, admonished, and threatened in vain, and was at length obliged to leave him, without obtaining any thing by my labour, but the strongest suspicions of his being accessory, at least, to the loss of the Will."

Mr. Edgeworth ceased, but for some time a profound silence prevailed.

At length Mrs. Almoré said, "Several circumstances, Sir, which I discovered this morn-

ing, leave me no doubt that your suspicions are just ; but as they do not amount to legal proof, I fear we must resign all hope of recovering the Will, unless Doyley should repent."

" I believe, Madam, he does repent, but he dare not risk the consequences of his villany, by disclosing it. I own, I fear the Will is irrecoverably lost ; and it affords an unhappy proof of the care requisite respecting a concern, which, I believe, is more frequently neglected, in one way or other, than any of equal importance in life."

" Unless," said Sir Robert, " fortune should unexpectedly favour us, I am afraid indeed the Will is gone ; yet I would still make some attempt to overcome the taciturnity of Doyley."

Mr. Edgeworth said, he would be glad to adopt any measure that Sir Robert thought proper for the purpose ; and Mrs. Almoré approved of the intention, but Frederic was too much hurt by the reflections to which the discussion gave rise, to take any part in the conversation.

Mrs. Almorne inquired of Mr. Edgeworth, if there was any chance of benefit to the younger members of the family from their father's personal property ? but he could give her no hope of it, as the large sums, which Sir John had expended on his sons, had involved him in debts that would probably equal it. One of these debts was five thousand pounds to Constantia, being the principal and interest of the money left her by Lady Anson, which had been put into his hands.

Mr. Edgeworth said, there was however a part of Sir John's property, to which he was uncertain whether the right lay in Sir Hastings or the younger children, and if in the latter, it would be of importance to them ; but he wished that the question might not be agitated without the advice of counsel.

Mrs. Almorne requested he would draw out a state of the case, which should be carried to town by Frederic, and submitted to the opinion of a celebrated lawyer, who had been an intimate friend of his father's.

The business with Mr. Edgeworth thus ter-

minated, Mrs. Almorne returned to Lady Horn-
don and Constantia, to inform them of what
had passed.

Constantia received the intelligence with
firmness ; and during the rest of the day showed
more calmness than she had possessed any day
since the death of her mother.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR Robert and Lady Horndon returned to Elbourne in the evening, and, on their departure, Mrs. Almorne told Constantia, that she wished to take her to Delvin Lodge the next morning.

Constantia was unwilling to oppose the wishes of Mrs. Almorne, but felt great reluctance to leaving Ornvile so abruptly ;——it was to part a second time with her father and mother.

Mrs. Almorne said, that she should soon return again if she desired it, but that she wished to hurry her away at present, on account of Frederic, who was anxious to see her at Delvin Lodge before he left her.

“ When does he go ?” asked Constantia.

"The moment you are settled," replied Mrs. Almorne, "for business calls him to town, where, I hope, constant occupation will be of service to him. He has been inexpressibly hurt by the disappearance of the Will, not only from the loss to the legatees, but the suspicions it has given rise to as to the cause of it."

"These suspicions, no doubt, rest upon Hastings."

"They do, and with the strongest appearance of justice. There can be little doubt that he employed Doyley to secrete the Will, which may be inferred, not merely from the behaviour of the latter to Edgeworth, but a variety of other circumstances. Mrs. Finch tells me, that Doyley's family have lately appeared in a state of expense greatly superior to the wealth they were supposed to possess, yet no explanation of their affluence has been given. This change in their condition took place soon after Hastings' visit here in October; and during both his last visits, his servant Nelson paid, for the first time, such assiduous court to Doyley's wife and daughters, as led the eldest girl to expect him as a

husband, though Mrs. Finch knew that he was privately engaged to another."

"Was it consistent with the prudence of Hastings to take such open means of gaining the favour of Doyley?"

"It was necessary to risk something ; and he probably thought the sudden change in Doyley's situation, would be forgotten long before your father's death. Nelson's attentions to the family, he would expect to be considered as the voluntary act of his servant, while they might be extremely useful, as it is well known that Doyley is governed by his wife. Perhaps, too, Nelson carried them farther than was prudent ; for he is a bad man, but a convenient servant, who will serve his master, without scruple about the means. Of Nelson's own suspicions, your brother would be regardless, as he has him securely in his interest. He has probably, however, been at pains to deceive him ; but, at all events, must have been conscious, that the odium of suspicions he could not wholly escape."

"My father thought Doyley a good man and a faithful servant, and he has been so long in

the family, that I could not have distrusted him."

"Your father, my dear, had great reason to think well of Doyley; but it is of little consequence what a man is, if he allows himself to be guided by a foolish woman; and of the vanity and folly of Doyley's wife, Hastings has taken advantage by means of Nelson.

Mrs. Finch has likewise informed me, that the night after your father's death, Hastings sent Nelson to bring Doyley to Canterbury on pretence of wishing to receive a particular account of the illness and last days of his father. For this anxiety he was highly extolled by Nelson, and it gained him credit with the servants, but to me, "is confirmation strong;" for he is neither the man to feel such anxiety, nor, if he were, would he be so impatient as not to wait a few days till he could meet with Frederic."

"These are striking facts."

"It appears also suspicious, that he should employ Wilber, to attend the opening of the papers. It surprised me at first as very unnecessary; but having no suspicion of his motives,

I thought of it little, till we discovered the loss of the Will. I think now, that he employed him to prevent his having intercourse with Edgeworth, who is an acute and honest man, that is much attached to the family. It may, too, be worthy of notice, that his health should have obliged him to stop, on his way here, at so convenient a place as Canterbury."

"From all these circumstances, I should have no doubt of his guilt, if I could imagine him capable of so base an action."

"It is not easy for you to imagine him capable of what must appear to you an act of extraordinary depravity; but, in my mind, it is not so bad as the cold-hearted, ungrateful behaviour he has long shown to his father and mother; and, in his own opinion, I dare say, the destruction of the Will is not a crime of a very deep die."

"How can he think so?"

"By not supposing it will reduce the legatees to distress. If he adds two or three thousand pounds to what you have from Lady Anson, he

will think you sufficiently provided for, as he believes it is in your power to marry well whenever you please, and probably thinks he does you a favour, by obliging you to overcome your romantic objections to rich Peers. At all events, he knows you have friends with whom you can have an agreeable home, and perhaps hopes, by laying you under obligation to himself, to involve you in a connection with his wife.

For Philip's disappointment, he will probably feel more than yours, and therefore, may intend to give him eight or nine thousand pounds, with the advantage of appearing to do a generous thing.

Frederic, he thinks, has already got too much ; Lady Horndon quite enough ; and as to the other legatees, he will suppose a very small matter should suffice ; and thus he will gain a large sum, without in the least disturbing his conscience."

" I believe it may be so."

" His intended marriage probably first led him to think with anxiety of the Will, for he might fear that it would produce an alteration in it to his disadvantage. It is likely, that in

October he engaged Doyley to inform him if your father made any change in it, and might hear of his having done so in November; but whatever may have been the circumstances that guided his conduct, it must now be your endeavour to think of it as little as possible; and fortunately there is no danger of your meeting with him soon, as, by a letter Frederic had from him this morning, I find he has no intention of being here before June. Let us now, then, go to Delvin Lodge, and you can revisit Ornaville if you please."

"I will leave it to-morrow, my dear Madam,
—but I shall never return!"

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER a night in which sleep had not for a moment weighed down the eye-lids of Constan-tia, she arose at an early hour,

She was now to bid farewell to all the scenes of her past life ;——to the place which was associated with every feeling of her heart. Scarcely could an image rise to her remembrance, which was not blended with the idea of Ornville Abbey.——Every spot, every tree, every shrub there, was interwoven with the recollection of her happiest hours.

Lately she was in this beloved place with the dearest objects of her affection ; surrounded by the pleasures of life,—secure of fortune, and blessed with every hope of future comfort ;——now she was to leave it for ever—deprived of

those beloved objects, and lost to every sense of joy.

Though shrinking with terror from the attempt, she could not think of leaving Ornaville, without taking a last look at every part of the house.—As soon as it was light, she left her room, and wandered through the numerous apartments of the Abbey, beginning with those she had least frequented, and gradually advancing to the most interesting.

Sometimes she sat down, and wept bitterly;—at others, she stood gazing on the scene before her, while.

“ Each dumb object spake.”

The library was one of the last places she visited. She stood for some minutes at the door before she had courage to open it, and entered with trembling steps.—Instead of the cheerful fire which used to blaze there,—instead of those benign looks and kind accents which used to greet her entrance, all was silent, cold, and desolate.—On advancing, she perceived a book lying open, with a reading glass upon it,

which her father had constantly used.—She turned, and would have fled, but her strength failed, and she sunk upon a chair.—The anguish she felt, was mingled with dread and despair.

Unable to look or move, she remained till she was roused by the striking of a clock.—From every stroke she felt a pang, which shook her whole frame ;—starting up, she flew from the library till she came to a room, the door of which being open, she saw from it the pictures of her father and mother.—The sight instantly restored her ; their benign countenances spoke the words of peace, and awakened only the sweetest recollections. She gazed and wept alternately, enjoying almost a species of delight, compared with what she had just suffered.

Here Mrs. Almorne found her, and wished to withdraw her from so affecting a scene ; but at the idea of removal, Constantia relapsed into her former unhappiness, and could with difficulty be prevailed upon to quit the spot.

“ My dear,” said Mrs. Almorne, “ you shall have copies of these pictures.”

“ Alas !” said Constantia, “ it is not the parting from them that I feel so severely,—it is the recollection of those to whom I must leave them ;—Oh ! Mrs. Almorne, how I wish they could be the companions of the purest spirits, who would regard them with veneration, and delight in the remembrance of their virtues !”

There was another task, which Constantia anxiously wished to perform before she quitted the Abbey,—the taking leave of the servants, most of whom had been long in the family, and much esteemed by her father and mother ; but to this Mrs. Almorne, seeing her quite exhausted, would not consent, as she could see them at Delvin Lodge.

Mrs. Almorne undertook to reconcile them, to her not taking leave of them before her departure. It was not difficult to persuade them, that she was unable to bid them farewell ; and

they all, at the desire of Mrs. Almorne, promised to keep out of sight till she was gone, except those whose presence was necessary.

As soon as breakfast was over, Constantia heard the rolling of the coach, which was to convey her from the Abbey.—“It has a death like sound!” cried she, trembling and turning pale,—but rising quickly, she ran, and precipitately threw herself into it.

Her brother, with Mrs. Almorne and the children immediately followed, and the carriage soon drove off.

To spare the feelings of Constantia and Frederick as much as possible, Mrs. Almorne desired the coachman to take them by another road, than the well-known avenue, which they had been so much accustomed to travel; but the kind intentions of Mrs. Almorne were frustrated, by Constantia’s placing herself in the back seat of the coach, and the circuitous course it took, gave her a view of the Abbey, and the surrounding scenery much longer than she could have had, if the carriage had taken the ordinary road.

Sometimes the whole of the house appeared in sight ; at others, she had only a glimpse of it through the trees, when a single window spoke to her still more forcibly.—At one moment she saw the towers of the Abbey rising in all their solemn grandeur,—at another, its ruins only were visible,—their melancholy and sublime beauty filled her with indescribable sensations.

She ardently gazed on these objects, as they alternately appeared to her view, or faded before her sight, till she came to an opening in the trees, not distant from a mount on which she saw a group of people assembled. As the carriage moved slowly along, she soon discovered them to be the servants, who had thus followed its course, and were eagerly watching to catch a last look of them as they passed.—

This sight overcame Constantia ;—she became insensible to every thing but her own affliction, and yielded to it without restraint, till she found the little arms of her nephews folded about her neck, and their lips pressing her cheek.—Clasping them fondly to her breast, she exclaimed, “ Dear images of my

father and brother, you have recalled me to life !
——I will command more composure.”

Mrs. Almoré and Frederic were not in a state to speak to her, and a mournful silence prevailed, till the carriage stopped at Delvin Lodge.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT Frederic's desire, Mrs. Almorne left him alone with Constantia in the evening, when, in the kindest and most delicate terms, he intreated that she would ever consider his house and fortune as her own.

Constantia warmly expressed her gratitude for the affection he had always shown her, which she had ever regarded as one of the first blessings of her life, and now felt still more valuable from their misfortunes having endeared him to her more than ever.

"Mrs. Almorne," said he, "tells me, that she will not part with you, or I should hope to have you often with me in town. She has also told me of Valmonsor, of whom I first heard on so interesting an occasion; and the intelligence she has given me, inspires the greatest

hope of your future comfort, while it fills me with regret for having deprived her of the means of rendering you immediately independent."

Constantia conjured him not to add to his distresses by self-reproaches, which were unjust, as the cause of his obligation to Mrs. Almorne did him so much honour, that it should be remembered only with satisfaction.

"It might," he replied, "if I were not conscious that it was my own misconduct, not the misfortunes of Evelyn, which reduced me to the necessity.—I am fated, Constantia, to distress all those I love!"

At these words, Frederic rose, and walked in a disordered manner about the room, till, seeing Constantia much agitated, he sat down by her, and entreated her forgiveness, saying, if he could not soften, he ought not, at least, to add to her distress.

He then earnestly desired her to be careful of herself, and let him hear of her frequently; adding, "You will consider me, not merely as a

friend and brother,—you will remember, that I am to be your father.”

To check the emotions which Constantia felt rising in her breast from this expression, she eagerly grasped his hand, and made a sign to him to be silent.

He obeyed, and, a minute after, anxious to divert the train of her thoughts, he called her attention to a sofa, upon which lay his sons; tired with play, they had thrown themselves upon it, and were fast asleep.

“ I have long thought,” said Frederic, rising, and leading her to the sofa, “ that one of the finest sights in nature was a beautiful child asleep ;—in this state, its innocence has often struck me as peculiarly charming.”

“ And never,” replied she, “ was it more striking than at this moment,—never were there two more lovely forms than we now see.”

But hardly had Frederic contemplated them a moment before he exclaimed, “ Gracious God ! what a sight is this !—Oh ! Constantia,

too truly did you say, that divorces should not be made easy!"

He threw himself beside his children in a transport of grief;—the agony he suffered was terrible, till Constantia, clasping him in her arms, appeared almost as much affected as himself. He then started up, and, assuming some appearance of composure, endeavoured to soothe her feelings.—Their concern for each other enabled them to suppress their emotions, and the return of Mrs. Almorne restored them to the state of calm melancholy in which she had left them.

CHAPTER XV.

EARLY next morning Frederic left Delvin Lodge, and a few days after his departure, Lady Horndon received a letter from Philip, which was intended for both his sisters. He condoled with them on the death of their father and mother, and lamented the loss of the Will, particularly on account of Constantia, whom he hoped Hastings would provide for properly, if the Will should not be recovered. He said, that he should very soon be married to Mrs. Melfont, and trusted they would behave to her as a sister; for he would not allow himself to suppose, that they would treat her, after she was their brother's wife, with severity, since other women in similar circumstances were often well received, even by those upon whom they had no claim. He concluded by saying, that it would give him and Mrs. Melfont the greatest pleasure to see Constantia one of their family.

To this letter Lady Horndon, with the approbation of her sister, returned an answer in general terms ; she spoke of their father and mother, and of the loss of the Will, but made no reply to what was said of Mrs. Melfont.

The next day brought Mrs. Almorne a letter from Frederic, in which he informed her, that he had consulted Mr. Ridgway with respect to the claim which Edgeworth thought they might have upon their father's property, and that his opinion was unfavourable to their wishes. He admitted that it was a fair subject of litigation, but did not think they had much prospect of success, and, at all events, wished it should rather be settled by arbitration, as, from his regard for the family, it would give him much uneasiness, if there was any public contest between the members of it ; especially as the loss of the Will would then become well known, which had much better be buried in oblivion.

Upon receiving this letter, Mrs. Almorne told Constantia, that since Mr. Ridgway's opinion was unfavourable, she should on several accounts wish them to give up the thoughts of a judicial contest with Hastings, though she did

not think the concealing of the loss of the Will, ought to be any inducement to it.

“ Mr. Ridgway probably thinks,” said Constantia, “ that it would be hard to bring the odium of public suspicions upon Hastings, which may be unmerited, and could not be attended with advantage.”

“ I am inclined to believe,” returned Mrs. Almorne, “ that it would have the most beneficial effects. If Hastings is innocent, he would be at pains to prove it, by joining his family in endeavouring to obtain information from Doyley ; he would become the most active of the whole for the discovery of the Will. If he is guilty, the eye of the public would, at least, render him anxious to compensate to the legatees for their loss ; particularly to yourself whom it is not credible that your father could leave unprovided.”

“ With Lady Anson's legacy, I may not be thought unprovided.”

“ When she bequeathed it, she told your father, that she trusted it would make no altera-

tion in his designs in your favour ; and he assured her, that he should think it extremely unjust to let it influence them, as it would be making her gift a present to his son, instead of to you. He, on the contrary, told me, that when you were married to Valmonsor, he would give you more than he had bequeathed you. He likewise told me, that he had bequeathed Frederic less than Philip, because he had already got a great deal more, and was in a situation to amass wealth for himself, which Philip's profession did not permit. All this evinces, how far he must have been from neglecting to make a Will."

" But were the story of the Will publicly known, might it not have bad effects upon Hastings, by making him regardless of character ?"

" The opposite expectation is one of my motives for objecting to concealment ; for were he afraid of public suspicion, he would endeavour to wipe off the stain by the correctness of his conduct. The suppression of the story, and the attentions he will meet with from his rank and fortune, will permit him to act as he pleases."

“ In this county, where the story must be known, I cannot think he will meet with much attention.”

“ He will probably, my dear, meet with a great deal. Some people will not hear the story; others will not believe it; and many who do both, will make no alteration in their behaviour to him upon that account. They may less readily make him their friend, but will not object to being his companion; for it is not their affair,—they have nothing to do with family quarrels,—it is unpleasant to be on bad terms with a neighbour;—they could not go into company at all, if they were to wait till they could find an assembly of the good only;—with a long string of hackneyed sayings, by which people justify themselves for associating with the bad. Hastings was but too right, when he told you, that a man of fortune might do with impunity, almost any thing he pleased.

In this world, Constantia, there is a perpetual struggle between the virtuous and the vicious, but the former would be victorious, were it not for a third class, who, without intending it,

support the latter. They are very numerous, and of various descriptions.

First, the Selfish, who will not hurt their interest with any set of men.

Secondly, the Timid, who, though good, have not courage to show disapprobation of the worthless.

Thirdly, the Indifferent, who will not give themselves trouble either about the good or the bad.

Fourthly, the Vain and Frivolous, who are so fond of the great and fashionable, that they would not for the world, hurt their consequence with a Rich or Right Honourable Rascal.

To these may be added a herd of Insignificant, who, having no strength of mind, are led by the majority.

I say nothing of those, who from hardships of situation are not free agents, but among the others, Hastings will find sufficient supporters.

I would not have vice imprudently attacked; men must be cautious how they act, if they would not be shot through the head, and both men and women should carefully avoid scandal; but there is a proper manner of discouraging the vicious, which good sense will point out, and dignity of character sustain.

I confess it must sometimes be extremely difficult for a man to act as he may wish, without involving himself in a duel, and however intrepid he may be, he cannot think it right, if he has a family, to expose his life rashly. In my early years, before I had an opportunity of tracing the consequences of duelling, I was disposed to consider it as a necessary evil ; but the more I have had occasion to observe its causes and effects, the more I view it as an evil of the first magnitude, and one of the great barriers to moral improvement in Europe. It proves much oftener a protection to vice, than a corrector of manners. Rash, hot-headed block-heads or bears, will give or provoke a challenge from the slightest causes, and thus the most valuable members of society are obliged, on very trivial occasions, to stake their life against that of the most worthless or contemptible being. This, I know, does, and must necessarily restrain men, upon many occasions, from showing a just and useful indignation at vice ; which is the more to be regretted, as the little good duelling does, might be better accomplished by other means.

It has been said, that there would be an end of duelling, if society would consider indecent

behaviour to an individual as an offence against itself; but this is not to be expected from society. Juries, however, might be established to decide upon such offences as give rise to duels, and oblige the guilty to make the proper submission, or receive the due punishment. An appeal to such juries could not be eluded, if every man, who gave or accepted a challenge, was instantly hanged.

Much of the evil arising from this barbarous practice, might indeed be immediately prevented, if the juries, who now decide on the fate of those who kill their antagonists in duels, would sometimes hang them, as some of them have most justly deserved; but it seems a settled point, that no man shall suffer by law for a duel.

The establishment of such a tribunal of honour as I propose, and a complete reformation of manners, with respect to this most absurd and unfortunate custom, would by many be deemed a chimerical project; but to me it appears only necessary, that it should be the work of a *great mind possessed of sovereign power*.

But even where there can be no danger of a duel, men are generally too indifferent to the correction of immorality, although it should be

remembered that "indulgence to vice, is a conspiracy against virtue."

Were there but one or two, open, bold, and firm characters in every town in England, who would not fear to assert the cause of injured virtue, vice would hardly dare to show its head.—Unfortunately, disinterested zeal is rare,—and undaunted virtue, a phenomenon."

"How melancholy!"

"It is ;—and perhaps it is yet more so, that when they appear, which, to the honour of human nature, they sometimes do, they are thought visionary. Such deviations from the common manner of thinking or acting, are termed wild ; and efforts of extraordinary benevolence are deemed *insanity*."

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. ALMORNE took very frequently morning airings with Constantia, and some times they extended their excursions to a distance, and did not return till the evening. She thought change of scene would be of service to her, and wished, also, to relieve her from a crowd of visitors who came daily to Delvin Lodge, to make their compliments of condolence.

On one of these excursions, while they stopt at an inn, Mrs. Almorne observed her turn pale on seeing an officer's hat lying upon a table. She did not appear to notice her emotion; but in the evening, when they were alone, she said, that she expected they should soon hear of Valmonsor.

Constantia did not answer; and, after a

pause, Mrs. Almorne added, that he must in a short time write to Sir Esmond.

Still Constantia made no reply.

"Sir Esmond will inform him," resumed Mrs. Almorne, "of your having left Ornaville, and he will then either come or write to you."

"I cannot expect," returned Constantia, "that Valmonsor will not be as much deterred by my adversity now, as he was lately by my prosperity."

"I am of a very different opinion," rejoined Mrs. Almorne; "and if I am mistaken, he is not the character that we have imagined.— Though you have not the money you expected, five thousand pounds are sufficient to permit him to offer you his hand; and as he has now no obstacle but want of fortune to dread, he ought at least to put the decision in your power."

Constantia remained silent.

"As he never expected to leave the army,"

continued Mrs. Almorne, "his disappointment in the loss of the Will, must be much less than yours; and indeed you have still the same property, that Harriet Hargrave made him believe you would have."

Constantia turned her face from Mrs. Almorne, without answering.

"I am not surprised," said Mrs. Almorne, after a short silence, "that this subject distresses you; but I did not expect that you would view it in so desponding a way as you seem to do."

"What misery!" cried Constantia, with much emotion, "has Harriet Hargrave occasioned me!—But for her, my father would never have suffered pain upon my account, and Valmonsor might now have been independent."

"Think not of her, my dear, except it be to rejoice that she did not separate you from him entirely. He will soon return, and I am persuaded with all the affection you could wish."

"I do not wish him to return."

“How ! not wish him to return !”

“Can I wish it, when the want of fortune must still oppose our union ?”

“Have you no confidence in my endeavours to serve you ?”

“The greatest, my dear Madam, but it is not immediately in your power to enrich me, and dare I trust in future events ?”

“Can you tell how soon I may be able to make such an addition to your five thousand pounds, as will not render it imprudent in you to marry ?”

Constantia appeared to struggle for a minute with very painful emotions, and then averting her face from Mrs. Almorne, said, “I have not five thousand pounds,—it is gone.”

“Gone !” repeated Mrs. Almorne, in astonishment, “how gone ?”

“Philip borrowed it.”

“Philip ! could Philip rob you ?”

“ He meant to repay me, but he too is robbed.”

“ Why, my dear, did you not tell me this sooner ?—why suffer me for an instant to mortify you by the mention of your money ?”

“ I was unwilling to aggravate the distress of you and Frederic, by the confession,—but you will now understand why I was so much affected by the loss of the Will ;—the moment you told me of it, I saw that I had nothing—that Valmonsor and I were separated for ever.”

“ No, my sweet girl, you are not separated ;—you are mine, and every injury you sustain only adds to my anxiety for your happiness.—But tell me, when did Philip get the money ?”

“ Nearly a year ago, soon after I was of age.”

“ On what pretence ?”

“ He said that he had got into embarrassments, from which he could not otherwise ex-

tricate himself. He knew that my father would never pay another sixpence for his inconsiderate debts, and he could not borrow the money without giving security for it, which if I would give, I could not be a loser, as my father would certainly bequeath him more."

"But you might have occasion for it before your father's death, nor could he depend on getting so much from his father, after the large sums his extravagance had cost him, which he knew had highly and justly offended him."

"He did not take all from me ; I shall still have about six hundred pounds."

"You gave, I suppose, a bond for the money to the person from whom he borrowed it ? Who was so cruel as to take it from you ?"

"Jacob Jervis."

"It was unpardonable. He knew, though you did not, that you would probably be a loser, for Philip is well known to be an extravagant young man, on whose prudence no reliance can be placed. But why, my dear, were you so

liberal to him? You must have been sensible his debts were improper, and that your indulgence might encourage his indiscretion."

"I was afraid of it, but hoped the difficulties he had experienced, would induce him to be cautious in future, and I was unwilling to see him in distress."

"Your being concerned for any distress of Frederic's, I should expect, but did not suppose you would feel so much for Philip. When he was a boy, he was so extremely troublesome and mischievous that he kept you in perpetual terror, and since he grew older, he has always behaved to you with the utmost indifference."

"I own that it was not affection, which induced me to assist him; I was excited to it by compassion, the urgency of his request, and the belief that it was my duty."

"I see how you have been misled; but O! Constantia, how many families might you have saved from misery, by the money you have given Philip?"

"You make me ashamed of myself."

“ You have no cause ; you did what appeared to you right, but it is necessary that you should consider how far regard to consanguinity ought to carry you. Upon the death of my children, being supposed a rich widow, who had nothing to do with my wealth, I had many applications from my own and Almorne’s relations ; and when I found them persons at all deserving of regard, I interested myself in their favour. Of some, I made the fortune, but others I dropped all connection with, and my principles, in this respect, are now so well known, that no applications are made to me on the score of consanguinity alone, though I have many from persons I never heard of.”

“ Well do I know this, for I had an instance of it four years ago, which made an impression upon me that will never be effaced. I was walking gaily at Ornvile with Miss Wyndham, when we were met by a poor woman almost fainting from fatigue, and covered with rags. She immediately entreated that we would get her an opportunity of speaking to you, who she heard was at the Abbey. I asked what she wanted, and if you knew her ? She said No, but she hoped you would relieve her from dis-

trials. Miss Wyndham unfeelingly asked, how she could expect you to be troubled with her? —She mildly replied, that she believed you would be glad to assist her. Her husband, she said, was in Jail for a small debt; Mrs. Almorne would listen to her story,—would inquire into the truth of it, and when she knew that he had been blameless and unfortunate, she was assured that she would rejoice in relieving him:—Delvin Lodge was called the Refuge of the unhappy.—How instantaneously did this poor woman make me feel the power of goodness! I have never since thought of the afflicted, without wishing that I could imitate the divine spirit of Mrs. Almorne.”

“Many circumstances, Constantia, require to be considered, before a character can be justly appreciated. The conduct, which you admire so much in me, is far from being so great a proof of goodness as you suppose. It costs me no sacrifices, and is attended with many advantages.—It proves a relief from melancholy: gives me an importance that might gratify vanity, and has obtained me credit for a generosity to which I have no pretensions; for my income is greatly superior to my personal expenses.

Thus I have acquired reputation, without even having had the merit of tracing for myself the line I should pursue. Mrs. Griffiths first pointed out the road I should take, and Mr. Al-morne afterwards conducted me in the same path. Were I disposed to forget all this, I should still be recalled to a just sense of my own merit, by comparing myself with others. There is a Mrs. R * * *, an inhabitant of the small town of B——e, who, with little fortune, but what she owes to her daily industry ; with a family to provide for, and without having had any instructors but her own understanding and goodness of heart, is unwearied in the exercise of benevolence. She gives her time, her money, and risks her health, in the service of the unfortunate ! That there are such characters as Mrs. R * * * 's, it is a blessing to know. In her is united the purest spirit of benevolence, with that active virtue, which our general knowledge of mankind would lead us to suppose, existed only in the imagination."

"In Mrs. R * * * 's situation you would act exactly as she does."

"I shall not at present contest this point with

you. My wish now is to inspire you with hope, and let me again assure you, that your interest shall be my first care."

Constantia, ever ardent in her feelings, testified her gratitude to Mrs. Almorne in the most lively manner, but declared that she should be unhappy in interrupting the exercise of that beneficence, which was the blessing of so many.

Mrs. Almorne said she hoped it would not be difficult to convince her, that attention to her interest was compatible with all her duties.

"You are not to be told, my Constantia," continued she, "how dear you are to me,—doubly now endeared by the loss of your parents; but you have many other claims upon me. If the ties of blood are to be regarded, who has a juster claim to Mr. Almorne's property than you, unless you think the right of primogeniture gives Hastings a better title?—If gratitude can have weight, what did I not owe to your Father!—You have, also, the sad claim of misfortune; while your personal merit convinces me, that enriching you, would be truly promoting the

welfare of others, by giving you the power or exercising those virtues upon which the happiness of society depends.—And were you even less precious, it would still be my delight to cherish you, for the sake of that benign spirit, who, upon his death-bed, committed you to my care.”

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN Mrs. Almornc was the next day with Constantia alone, she told her, that since the loss she had sustained by Philip was unknown to her friends, she wished it to remain concealed.

“It will,” said she, “prevent distress to your real friends, and spare you the pity of the unfeeling, and the observations of the curious. It was not known what fortune you expected from your father, and you will still be supposed independent. Surrounded as you are by affluent friends, your change of situation will not appear distressing, except from a cause which must excite the truest sympathy, and thus you will be left to conduct yourself as you think proper, without inquiry or animadversion.”

“I should be glad,” replied Constantia, “to
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conceal my loss, were it only upon Philip's account ; but since we are upon the subject of my finances, I wish to tell you the views I have taken of my situation."

" Speak freely, my dear."

" I have already told you how willingly I should be indebted to you, as far as I can be so without injury to yourself, or others ;—but still it must be remembered, that I may as suddenly——"

" I understand you," said Mrs. Almorne ; " we may be separated, before I have time to make the provision for you that I wish."

" Nothing," said Constantia, recovering herself, " can ever happen to me more unexpected, than what has already befallen me. A few weeks ago, I should have thought it impossible for any thing, but a revolution or an earthquake, to reduce me so suddenly, while a single woman, from affluence to poverty.—It becomes, therefore, necessary to be prepared for every vicissitude of fortune. I may not support adversity as I could wish, but I shall be the fitter

for it, if I accustom myself to think of it frequently.—In the course of a few months, I have experienced a variety of distress. In the beginning, misery was new, and I fancied the pain I felt could not be exceeded. I could not, perhaps, feel more acutely, but I could suffer more, and I have been taught that our capacity for suffering is great.—The last blow I received showed me that a free indulgence of feeling was no longer to be permitted me. There are occasions on which feeling must be suspended, and action called forth.—While possessed of fortune, I might for a time, allow myself to yield to affliction; but, deprived of that support, I felt that firmness was necessary, and that to the exertions of my own mind I must trust for independence.—I knew, it was true, that in you I had still an inestimable parent, and in Louisa, a most invaluable friend; but it was not right that I should be a lifeless burden upon either of you;—and, as I have said, I might lose you, as I have done others.—Lest, therefore, I should suffer so great a calamity, I have been considering by what means I could render myself as independent as the nature of my situation will permit.”

"It is right, my dear, that you should consider your situation in every point of view."

"In the event then of a separation from you, my first care would be to sink my little money for an annuity; but upon it I could be independent only in a cottage. If I mean to live in society, I must reside with some friend, and you will be sensible, that I could not have a proper home in the houses of any of my family. Sir Robert Horndon is not parsimonious, and I believe him perfectly sincere in the offer he has made me, but I can never regard or esteem him so far as to put myself under obligation to him. His temper, though improved, will never be amiable, and now that my father's death may set him at liberty, I should live in constant dread of him relapsing into his former habits; and what would be very painful, I should be conscious of being a disagreeable guest. Although he wishes me well, he could not be happy in seeing me always at his fireside, nor could he forget what I have thought of him, or the advice I have given his wife."

"I confess your objections to his house appear unanswerable."

“ The objections to the houses of my brothers are yet stronger. Of Hastings and Philip, it is unnecessary to speak ; but dare I promise that Miss Alderton will not be the wife of Frederic ? When the all-powerful influence of time has meliorated his affliction, is it not to be feared that she will again exert all her skill to subject him to her power ? and as he does not implicate her in the faults of her mother, it seems but too probable, that he will once more become the victim of her art.”

“ I am unwilling to believe that he will ever listen to her again, but as it is uncertain, we shall for a moment suppose that he may.”

“ With her then, as his wife, his house must be lost to me, for her conduct has betrayed irrefragable proofs of a bad heart. When I reflect on Sally Cusliffe, without comparing her with Mrs. Melfont or Miss Alderton, my reason, as well as feelings, determine me never to see her ; but when I contrast her with them, I feel that I would rather be her servant, than their companion.”

“ Yet to the eye of the world, your pre-

ference of her, would appear extraordinary and unjustifiable."

"But to my own, Miss Alderton appears in a light, that would prevent my even receiving pecuniary favours from Frederic, if she were his wife; for with what grace could I take from him, if I could not treat his wife with the consideration he would expect?"

"It is singular, that you should have three brothers and a sister, who from one cause or other, would all, I believe, be happy to have you with them, yet with none of them could you be properly situated."

"How difficult is it to find an agreeable home?—How many circumstances imperious to the eye of another, may render even the houses of those we love painful!—But since it happens, that I can neither reside with my near relations, nor afford to live alone in the society to which I have been accustomed, the question is what plan of life I should adopt. In absolute retirement, I should have money sufficient for my little wants, and to sorrow and solitude I could submit; but not to idleness.

Yet how am I to find employment? As a single woman, my domestic cares could afford little occupation, and poverty and seclusion would deprive me of the means of being useful to others.—My opinion therefore is, that I should not go into retirement, but adopt some plan of life, which would give me at once respectable employment, and the means of improving my income: I should not be ashamed of labour, but should be humiliated to the dust by uselessness."

"I am not surprised, my dear, at such language from you; it is suited to the opinion I have formed of the dignity of your character, and the force of your mind,—but I fear the objects you have in view, are more difficult of attainment than you suppose, and more painful in possession, than you imagine. Unfortunately, there is no employment, by which women of your rank in life, can improve their income, without in some degree, sinking their station: at least, they must be endowed with rare talents, before they can hope to do otherwise. The state of women in this respect is deplorable, and often induces them to form

matrimonial connexions, for which they suffer first reproach, and afterwards misery."

"Is there not, in the wide field of creation, a single employment, by which a woman of ordinary talents in my station, may render herself respectable and independent?"

"Not without the sacrifice of her place in society."

"Let me then, sacrifice that rank, which cannot avail me, and substitute in its stead, occupations that may reconcile me to my fate."

"With your character, a solitary, insignificant life, would indeed be dreadful, but is it not possible that you may marry?"

"I will not say what is impossible, but I can never think of marriage as a means of relief. Though I could forget Valmonsor, I cannot forget, that if my husband prove a villain or a reptile, I have no resource."

"None."

“ I think I know something of myself, and believe that I should prefer the poorest cottage, the coarsest fare, the hardest labour, to imprisonment with the vicious amidst all the luxuries of life. I could never be a tame spectator of vice.—To be the constant associate of the base,—to live in misery and restraint, yet be obliged to dissemble my feelings ; to be forced to act the part of a friend, while my heart was swelling with indignation,—constrained, perhaps, to break my vows at the altar, or become the tool of wickedness, is a state, which I shudder even to think of !——I must therefore, seek some other means of securing the active life I wish.

“ Happy ! ye sons of busy life,
“ Who equal to the bustling strife,
“ No other views regard !
“ Ev’n when the wished end’s deny’d,
“ Yet while the busy means are ply’d,
“ They bring their own reward :
“ Whilst I, a hope-abandoned wight,
“ Unfitted with an aim,
“ Meet ev’ry sad returning night,
“ And joyless morn the same.”

“ Were not my hopes for you much better

than your own, I should feel much pain in telling you, that however fit you may be for the plan you propose, it is impracticable, without consequences, which, I believe, you would not risk. Were you to maintain yourself by your own industry, however laudable the mode, Lady Horndon and Frederic would not only suffer severe mortification, but reproach, for the world would believe it was their unkindness alone, which could reduce you to such a state."

"From the censure of the world, I could certainly exculpate them."

"Could you do so without criminating yourself? You could not avow your real motives for not residing with them, and the more justly you represented their characters, the more you would bring upon yourself the imputation of ingratitude, obstinacy, and singularity. No one would understand, why you should prefer a painful and humiliating situation to residence with them. From your long acquaintance with Sir Robert Horndon, some might imagine you had reasons for not being obliged to him, but to your brother, they would say, what objection could you possibly have?"

"It should always be supposed that there may be just motives of conduct, which cannot be known."

"But this is seldom considered. Instead of making allowances for your separation from Lady Horndon and Frederic, numbers would condemn you for not living with Mrs. Melfont or Sally Cusliffe, rather than toil for yourself. Both these women will probably soon after they are married, be partially admitted into company, and your neglect of them, even while you are supposed independent, will by many be termed rigid or affected virtue."

"I must do then what I disapprove to preserve the esteem of the world?"

"If you would not be censured, you must certainly not deviate far from the beaten track of life, and when relations are concerned, you must both suffer and sacrifice. Had you no sister or brothers, your working cheerfully for yourself, rather than make a mercenary marriage, or be a burden upon your friends, would be termed true greatness of mind; but as you are situated, it would be deemed so odd, that

few persons would think it prudent to connect themselves with you ; so much is it in the power of fortune to give a colour to our actions."

" How discouraging !"

" There is yet another obstacle to your wishes ; you may be assured that both Hastings and Philip would make you very kind offers, rather than you should act as you propose ; and the more they offer, the more would you be censured for pursuing your plan."

" To them I must never be indebted ; but I feel that my scheme must be abandoned, without daring to consider what may be the alternative. No deprivations would wholly overcome me, were I in a situation to respect myself ; misery itself, with noble occupations, would be preferable to a life of calm insignificance."

" How much my anxiety for your happiness, increases with my knowledge of your character !"

" What do I not owe to you, my dear Madam, for having made me independent of the

vanities of life?—But for you, I should now have been tortured with the mortifications of wounded pride. Had I children, how carefully would I instill into their minds, sentiments that might enable them to sustain with firmness every situation, into which the wheel of fortune could throw them !”

“ Yet, were I certain of your leading a single life in obscurity, I should, on your own account, regret, your not having had that common education, which would allow you to find ample satisfaction in working fringe, playing at cards, and talking of your acquaintance ; but for the sake of others, I rejoice in your having been made rational, as the mischief which may arise from the folly of even the most insignificant female is incalculable.

Of this you have a proof in the loss of the Will, since from the circumstances we heard this morning, joined to the misery that Doyley certainly suffers, there can be no doubt, that he has acted in opposition to his own feelings, through the influence of his wife.”

“ It seems indeed certain, that his desire to indulge her vanity has misled him, though it is

probable that she did not know the sacrifice he made to her, for she is a good woman, though a very foolish one."

"I trust, my beloved Constantia, that your qualities will prove equally fortunate for yourself and others, and that I shall have the happiness of seeing you the delight of that society, which you are formed to adorn."

CHAPTER XVIII.

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“**Y**ou have friends, Constantia,” said Mrs. Almorne to her the next morning, “who, if they can help it, will not allow you to be either idle or unhappy. Here is a letter from Sir Esmond Anson, the contents of which are for you.”

Upon saying this, she put the following letter into her hand.

‘ TO MRS. ALMORNE.

‘ My dear Madam,

‘ Vain would be the attempt to describe my astonishment and concern, upon being informed of the loss of my revered friend’s Will. Since the moment I received the intelligence, it has engrossed my thoughts,—but I shall for-

bear to trouble you with my reflections, as the design of this letter is not to aggravate, but, if possible, to lessen the misfortune to Miss Orville.

‘ If any thing could alleviate my concern for the event, it would be that it affords me an opportunity of showing the interest I take in her happiness, and the veneration I have for the memory of my mother. Constantia knows how tenderly she was beloved by her, and how much I owe her, for having softened the last years of my mother’s life. On her death-bed, she desired that I would always consider her as her daughter, and if I should not be so fortunate as to give her a legal claim to the title, that I should at least unceasingly regard her as a sister.

‘ After knowing this, my dear Madam, will she not permit me to repair the loss she has sustained? Mr. Anson anxiously wished to have this satisfaction, and flattered himself that she would regard him as a parent; but I would not relinquish to him so great a happiness, since I had claims upon her far superior to any which could arise from personal merit. Her father was so truly a father to me, that I feel myself doubly her brother;—nor must she forget, that it is to

herself I owe the perfect happiness I now enjoy.

‘ Thus encouraged, I have presumed to execute a deed in her favour, which I have consigned to the care of her brother Frederic. My fortune is so great, that she cannot fear it will expose me to the least inconvenience, and I should suffer the severest mortification, if she could hesitate to oblige me from any other cause.

‘ Mrs. Arnvale and Mr. Anson are well, and we all wait most impatiently your permission to come to Delvin Lodge, where I hope I shall have the delight of seeing Matilda united by friendship to the woman, whose virtues she has been so desirous of emulating.

I ever am, with the most perfect esteem and grateful affection,

Dear Madam,

Your faithful humble servant,

London, Feb. 24th.

ESMOND ANSON.

“ What delight,” said Constantia, melting

into tears on the perusal of this letter, "do kind and generous actions afford!—I feel myself the happier and the better for this letter, though I cannot accept Sir Esmond's offer."

"Why not accept of it?" said Mrs. Almonre; "his fortune is great, and you may truly consider him as a brother."

"Even from a brother, the gift would be too much for myself; and for Valmonsor, I ought not to think of it. Would he choose to take so large a sum from a man on whose generosity he has no claim?"

"I think he has a strong one. He has been from childhood the chosen friend of Sir Esmond, and why should not the latter give a portion of that wealth of which he has so much, to remove his friend from a miserable to a happy state? You would not hesitate to say he should, did not the general selfishness of mankind make such benefactions so rare, that their value is over-rated. You will tell me that this very selfishness is the proof of their merit,—and I grant that it renders generosity an uncommon virtue, but we must not appreciate the merit of good

actions, by contrasting them with bad. This mode of judging, however, and the great importance of money, gives pecuniary favours, almost always, a stamp, of which they are rarely deserving.

I have seen many persons sacrifice their health and comfort in the service of their friends, without being thought to do them any particular favour; while a pecuniary gift from a rich man, who had more money than he had any occasion for, would be esteemed a great and everlasting obligation.

I am convinced that Sir Esmond would find his own happiness promoted by that of his friend; but it is your happiness which he has in view at present, and, if you accept his offer, it will be you, not Valmonsor, who will be obliged to him."

"Were I even inclined to accept of it, I could not with propriety, while the loss of Lady Anson's legacy remains unknown."

"Answer him, then, according to the dictates of your own heart; and when Valmonsor appears, it will be time enough to consider the matter farther."

CHAPTER XIX.

BEFORE Constantia left Ornvile, she had received a most affectionate letter from Louisa, inclosed in one to Mrs. Almorne, in which she requested to be particularly informed how Constantia was?

Mrs. Almorne answered her letter before the loss of the Will was discovered, and when she had occasion to write to her again, in consequence of another inquiry from her, Constantia desired that she might not be informed of it. She was unwilling to disturb unnecessarily the peace of her friend, and, as Miss Hargrave was at a distance, she hoped that she might be kept in ignorance till the period of her return. But Louisa was too anxious about Constantia, to be satisfied without hearing of her oftener than she could ask Mrs. Almorne to write. She therefore wrote to Mrs. Finch, the old housekeeper

at Ornaville, to desire that she would give her all the information about Miss Ornaville in her power, and by her she was informed of the loss of the Will, and of the family having left the Abbey.

The intelligence distressed her so much, that Tresilian proposed they should immediately go to Delvin Lodge, whither they accordingly went, several weeks before Constantia had any expectation of seeing them.

Their meeting was very affecting, but Louisa was the most overcome by it, for Constantia was anxious to suppress her grief in the presence of her friend.

After they had been some time together, Mrs. Almorne, at the desire of Louisa, withdrew with her to another apartment.

Tresilian was no sooner alone with Constantia, than looking at her with much anxiety, he said, "I am going, Miss Ornaville, to put your friendship for my wife, and your opinion of myself to the test ;—we have a favour to request of

you, on which the peace of Louisa, and consequently my own depends.

“ I may then,” replied Constantia, “ almost promise compliance, without knowing what it is ; can there be any thing I would not do, for friends that are so dear to me ? ”

“ I fear there may ; you do not probably think of me as I could wish, or I should have no doubt of your compliance ;—but let me conjure you to consider, that it is in your power to complete our happiness, or, by refusing our request, to inflict upon us real sorrow and mortification.”

“ You excite my surprise and curiosity,” said Constantia, “ but not my apprehension ; I have no fear of refusing any request of yours, or, at least, of not being able to convince you, that to inflict sorrow and mortification upon you, would be to render myself miserable.”

“ Deign then to accept the fortune, which Louisa inherited from her father. Were she unmarried, it would be her first wish to share it with you ; she is now independent of it, and cannot employ it in any way so conducive to

her happiness, as by compensating to you for the injustice that has been done you."

"How," cried Constantia, with the strongest emotion, "can I ever thank you, my generous friends, for such a testimony of regard!"

"There is but one way," replied Tresilian, warmly, "comply with our request, without any expression of acknowledgment; it will be a proof of your esteem, more gratifying to us than you can ever know."

"But if your generous designs in my favour should be more than my situation requires, would you have me take advantage of your goodness to enrich myself unnecessarily?"

"Pardon, Louisa, Madam, for having made me fully acquainted with your situation; she could not conceal it, from the distress she betrayed on the first knowledge of your pecuniary loss. Truly, as I had sympathised in all your afflictions, yet the peculiar grief she then discovered, appeared to me unaccountable, since she had previously informed me that you had property independent of your father. I endea-

voured to console her by reflections, which only aggravated her concern, and led her at length to confess the particular cause of her sorrow."

"Amiable Louisa!"

"What must I think of her, to whom her virtues are new? I thought tolerably of myself before I was married,—before I had an opportunity of seeing all her angelic qualities; but now, I am only pleased with myself when I imitate her. Shall I own, that the proposal I have made, was first suggested by me, not solely from concern for your happiness, but from anxiety to anticipate her wishes? Had you seen the effect it produced, you would know, that I must ever consider that moment as the most precious of my life."

For some time Constantia and Tresilian were both silent.

"Will you now, Miss Ornaville," resumed he, "can you refuse to gratify our wishes? You, who were the sole support of Louisa in all her afflictions, will you at last leave her a prey to regret?"

"Inability to speak," said Constantia, "has kept me silent, or I should sooner have informed you, that however great my inclination to be indebted to you is, the kindness of another has put it out of my power to comply with your request."

"We know," answered Tresilian, eagerly, "that Mrs. Almorne will do every thing for you that she possibly can, but it would require years of painful parsimony, to enable her to do what she could wish."

"It is not Mrs. Almorne to whom I allude ; I am aware of her situation ;—but read this," continued she, taking Sir Esmond's letter from her pocket book, "and you will see how rich I am in friends."

"It shows you," resumed she, as soon as he had perused it, "that I could not avail myself of your kindness without acting unjustly to Sir Esmond, but be assured that there is no person, Mrs. Almorne not excepted, to whom I should more willingly be obliged than to you and Louisa."

"I am grieved that I cannot justly oppose your preference of Sir Esmond; I am sensible of his superior claims, though I shall ever regret that Louisa and I have not been so fortunate as to promote your happiness."

"You are mistaken, my dear friend,—you promote it greatly; the remembrance of your kindness will dwell in my heart, and be a source of joy to me in every situation. I should tell you also, that though I cannot accept your offer, I am very far from intending to accept Sir Esmond's; while Mrs Almorne lives, my personal wants will be amply supplied by her, and it is very possible, that I may never have occasion for more."

"Louisa entertains very different expectations."

"Although they were just, I am still undetermined how I ought to act. But this is an embarrassing subject; I am far from regretting the information she has given you, yet I feel ashamed of appearing to cherish expectations of a man, who never declared any affection for me."

"Yet in me, you see an instance of one, who with every advantage of situation, was led by mistake to conceal his attachment. We have both been sufferers by Harriet Hargrave, but I trust your difficulties will end as happily as mine."

Constantia replied, that she did not dare to anticipate future events, but would not damp his satisfaction by gloomy reflections.

She then proposed their rejoining Louisa and Mrs. Almore.

The former was waiting most anxiously for the result of their conference, which at first disappointed her extremely, but she could not be insensible to Sir Esmond's claims, and was consoled by the hope that her expectations of future happiness to Constantia would not be blasted by the stroke of adverse fortune she had met with.

CHAPTER XX.

IN seeing the happiness of Tresilian and Louisa, Constantia felt the first dawn of joy she had experienced, since her separation from them. They passed several days at Delvin Lodge, before they went to Tresilian Vale, where, for some time, they were obliged to be much engaged in receiving and returning visits.

Constantia was now, also, under the necessity of employing herself in the same manner, which she found very painful. The meeting with persons, who regarded her father and mother, aggravated her grief, while, with too many others, she was obliged to act the tiresome part of an automaton.

Every minute, however, that Mr. and Mrs. Tresilian could spare from other engagements,

they passed at Delvin Lodge, and always with advantage to Constantia, who, afraid of poisoning their happiness by her sadness, exerted herself in their presence to a degree, that lessened for a moment the gloom of her mind.

In this way several weeks elapsed, and Mrs. Almorne hoped her spirits were recovering; but though in company she seemed less unhappy, her sorrow in private was undiminished.

The spring was now far advanced, and the weather was fine, but the heart of Constantia sunk at the appearance of a bright morning, and she sighed for the gloomy days of November, as more congenial to her tone of mind.

Miserable and restless, she often wandered alone from place to place, in hopes of relief, but every object she saw, spoke to her the language of sorrow.—The bloom of opening flowers, the music of the birds, and splendour of the sun, gave the deepest shade to her melancholy, by the painful contrast they presented to her feelings; and by recalling, with bitter poignancy to her remembrance, the days of other springs.—When she thought of her mother,

she would often retire to a sequestered spot, and weep bitterly.—For her father, she could seldom weep.—Her heart bled at the recollection,—and the idea of him was so interwoven with every thing that was pleasing or animated in nature,—with all that was just and admirable, that she could hardly believe he was no more ! —All was dark and desolate !——With anguish she repeated,

“ When shall spring visit the mouldering urn !

“ O ! when shall it dawn on the gloom of the grave !”

One morning she was sitting silently with Mrs. Almorne, when a servant came into the room with two letters.

“ From Frederic and Sir Esmond,” said Mrs. Almorne, casting her eye on the superscriptions, and was proceeding to open them, when happening to look at Constantia, she saw her pale

as death, She immediately threw them down, and in the kindest accents asked, if she was ill?

“Not ill,” answered Constantia;—“I am always thus affected on the arrival of letters; I am continually in dread of what I may hear.”

“Is it for Valmonsor, you fear?”

“I am not without fears for him, but I tremble also for Frederic and Hastings.”

“My letters appear to be so short, said Mrs. Almorne, “that they can contain nothing disagreeable.”

She then opened them, and, having read them, gave them to Constantia, saying, “Frederic’s is only a kind inquiry about you, and Sir Esmond’s, a few lines to tell me that business will detain him in town till June. I wrote to him the other day, that we should now be glad to see him; but, on your account, I am pleased with the delay.”

“My grief would ill accord with his joy,” replied Constantia;—“so ill, indeed, that I should wish to avoid meeting him in June, if

you would not disapprove of a scheme I have been thinking of."——

"It is?"——

"To leave Kent, and go into retirement for a time. My motives are strong and various. Lady Anson must involve you in a crowd of gay company during the summer, and I should either greatly damp her satisfaction, or be obliged to assume a disguise, that would be very painful, and scarcely right. Should I so soon appear forgetful of those I have lost, or see without exquisite pain, such characters as Hastings and Sally Cusliffe in their place?"

"I hope they will not be here soon; he will wait till recent events are a little forgotten, before he marries."

"That is precarious, and I shall live in constant terror both for him and Frederic. I cannot expect that Miss Alderton will not, in the course of the summer, renew her machinations."

"Are you not, my dear, anticipating evil?"

it must be very long before Frederic is in a state of mind to think of her."

"If left to himself, he never would ; but what may not powerful arts accomplish? and his having been twice deceived, shows that it is not difficult to impose upon him."

"I do not imagine that it is easier to impose upon him than the generality of men, but as he was not deceived in Lydia's affection for him, he will the more readily believe in Miss Alderton's, whose arts have probably been very skillful. And do we not daily see men of the first parts, duped by the silliest women ; even by those whose public conduct might be a security against all respect for them ?"

"What would I not suffer to preserve Frederic from Miss Alderton ! not only from regard to his happiness, but to his character. You say that we are in danger of becoming similar to the persons we live with, even when we have no attachment to them."

"It is true ; I have seen respectable people almost transformed in this way. They are gra-

dually, and imperceptibly altered, as constant friction at length changes the appearance of the hardest substances."

"Time may enable me to think of the fate of all my brothers with greater firmness, but at present, I wish to remove to some quiet abode, where I shall not only escape the evils I dread, but accustom myself to those deprivations, which sooner or later I may be compelled to suffer. I believe myself fully capable of relinquishing them without mortification, but not perhaps without inconvenience. Let me try what it is to live without equipage, without servants, or any of the luxuries to which I have been accustomed;—without even society; give me only simple necessities, and books. I shall lament my absence from you and Louisa, but I may perhaps be better, and wiser, during life, for the trial I propose."

"Where would you retire to?"

"I should wish to become a lodger in the family of some respectable country clergyman, where I could have protection, retirement, and freedom to act as I thought proper."

“ Have you no fear of solitude ?”

“ Less than of remaining in Kent.”

“ Many talk in praise of solitude without meaning more than retirement with one or two friends, but the life of a hermit, few can sustain.”

“ I should not wish to avoid the society of such strangers, as might accidentally fall in my way.”

“ Still the trial would be too severe. If you have distresses here, you have also consolations, but how can I suppose a young woman like you, who has been accustomed to all the joys of society,—to almost every blessing of life, can be able to support so great, so instantaneous a change ?”

“ Were I more fit for it, I should less desire it, but it is a lesson I require, and may not again have an opportunity for. I should not now have resolution to leave you, if I could remain in Kent with any tranquillity.”

“ You are too sad to be alone.”

“ I shall remember the companions Louisa had at Oak Hill, and be thankful. My home will be a place of rest ; my time, my society, my conduct, will all be in my own power.”

“ You begin to overcome my objections.”

“ Do not fear for me, my dear Madam ; books and memory will supply me with treasures.

“ Yet if you should sink under the retrospect?”

“ I must suffer, but if I have reflection, I cannot sink, for I shall remember the innumerable calamities which are nobly sustained by thousands.—It is in solitude I shall best know my own weight, and acquire that strength of mind, which is a guide in prosperity, and a support in adversity. The firmness arising from conscious rectitude, and contempt of little objects, will sustain the mind in very trying circumstances, though the heart may suffer severely. I may never attain the point I aim at, but I shall

approach nearer by making the attempt. The answer of Medea, when her confidant asks, what she has to support her against so many enemies, is for ever in my mind. 'Myself,' replies she; 'myself I say, and it is enough.'

"I can no longer, my dear, oppose your wishes; it is right they should be indulged, since you can quit your retirement as soon as you please."

"You relieve me from a load of anxiety."

"I shall suffer extremely from the loss of you, but I cannot prefer my interest to yours. Have you fixed on a place of retirement?"

"I wish it to be remote to avoid meeting with acquaintance, but otherwise have no choice. Where would you approve of my going?"

"To the lakes of Cumberland. There is a respectable old couple, friends of mine, of the name of Delme, who reside at a beautiful place in Cumberland called Silver Mofs. There you will be in every respect to your wish, and they will, I am sure, be happy to accommodate you,

and do every thing in their power to render your abode agreeable. I do not mean that you should be one of their family, unless you desire it; but you will lodge with them, and can otherwise do as you think proper. Their servants, however, will be yours, and you shall have my old Stanbury for your personal attendant."

"With such a family, I can have no occasion for a servant of my own, which is inconsistent with my plan."

"Do not employ her then, but permit her to reside in the house with you for my satisfaction."

"You have endeavoured to make me independent, and now is the time to practise your lessons. When you and my father were so anxious that I should be skilled in housewifery, I little thought the day would come, that I should rejoice I could be my own servant in every capacity!"

"You can hardly reflect on the vicissitudes of life, without seeing the advantage of such an education; but in every view it is proper, for

no prosperity should exempt a woman from perfect knowledge of, and strict attention to domestic concerns

Leave your plan now, entirely to my care; I shall manage it to your satisfaction."

"One difficulty yet remains,—the leaving Lady Anson."

"She will lament, but will excuse your departure. Trust your interest with her to me.—To your acquaintance, I shall only say that you are with some friends of mine, as you wished to leave Kent for a while, which will be easily understood."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE prospect of passing some time in retirement, had much effect in tranquillizing the mind of Constantia, and the strong expression of anxiety which had lately marked her countenance, now softened into a placid, though deep melancholy.

As Mrs Almorne knew that nothing could tend to soften her unhappiness more, than being relieved from her fears about Frederic, and as she was herself very anxious to hear of him, she wrote privately to Mr Hanway to inquire how he was, and if any circumstance had occurred which could excite apprehension of his connexion with Miss Alderton, being some day renewed. She desired him to inclose his answer to Mrs. Tresilian, if it was unfavourable to her

wishes, that Miss Ornvill might be spared the knowledge of it.

Mr Hanway did not allow her to remain long in uncertainty. In a few days, she received from him the following letter under cover to Mrs Tresilian.

‘ To MRS. ALMORNE.

‘ Your letter of the 29th of April, my dear Madam, is the only one I ever received from you with regret, as it obliges me to give you intelligence, which is not so agreeable as I could wish.

‘ I had hoped that our friend had for ever escaped the power of Miss Alderton, but that her influence over him may not be renewed, I now dare not expect.

‘ Upon his return to town from Kent, he asked her brother, in my presence, how she was, and said he was glad to hear of her welfare, but said nothing more.—About a fortnight ago, he came to me in great agitation, with a letter from her in his hand, and told me that he had seen her twice.’

“ A few days ago,” said he, “ as I was tak-

ing a walk, I saw her coming towards me ; upon which I instantly turned, and flew from her with all the expedition I could. Yesterday, she appeared again suddenly before me, when I was so near that I could hardly avoid her, and seeing that she wished to speak to me, I resolved to endure the pain of a meeting, that it might be the last.

She addressed me first, but I was in so perturbed a state, that I scarcely knew what she said.—In a minute or two, however, I was able to tell her, that I had suffered much since we parted, and wished to have been more recovered from the misfortunes that had befallen me, before we had met.—She said, my misfortunes had affected her to a degree, which it was impossible to express, and that she should ever be wretched in having had a share, however innocently, in occasioning me any distress.—She lamented excessively the conduct of her mother, but added, that she could not help remembering it had proceeded from too much anxiety for her daughter.

She was extremely affected, and I was so much overcome, that I could not say what I wished.—I told her that I was wholly unable to

speak of past events, and, after expressing my concern for her, in a very hurried manner, I left her abruptly.

This morning, she sent me a letter, which I have brought, with my answer, for your perusal, as I will do nothing without your knowledge."

' He then put both letters into my hand, the contents of which I shall give you, as exactly as I can remember.

' She began by saying, that though it was so shocking to him to see her, she hoped a letter would be less painful, and that she could not repress the anxiety she felt to request his forgiveness for having accosted him, upon their accidental meeting the preceding day. It was owing, she said, to an almost insupportable solicitude to express to him, once in her life, the regret and misery she had suffered upon his account. That she should never cease to lament his woes, and that her own health and life would probably fall victims to them, which she should think a just, but far from availing atonement. That it should be her constant prayer, as long as she lived, to hear of his welfare, and, if possible, the restoration of his peace;—her admiration of him hourly increased, while she felt that her affection for him could never die,—but

that she should now take leave of him for ever, as it was impossible that he could see her mother or her again, without horror.

‘ Her letter was so pathetically written, that had I not been steeled against her, it would have affected me. It is no wonder, then, that it touched my young friend, and produced an answer, which I lament.

‘ He told her that she was greatly mistaken in supposing his peace could be restored if she continued a sufferer upon his account; that, on the contrary, the distress he had occasioned her, was not one of the least evils he had endured; he was far from implicating her in the conduct of her mother, and should feel it a real consolation, if it could be in his power to promote her comfort. He said that he should always be deeply interested in her fate, but that he did not expect he should ever recover such tranquillity, as would permit him to offer her his hand. For her sake, therefore, he must wish, that she should cease to remember him,—but if, contrary to his expectations, he should yet recover some firmness, and she should continue to honour him with her regard, and feel no reluctance to uniting herself to a broken spirit, it would then be his earnest endeavour to promote her

happiness.—At present, he could not give her a greater proof of his regard, than by ardently wishing that she might forget he existed.

‘I considered this letter as giving such encouragement to her designs, that I was strongly tempted to object to it, but a moment’s reflection restrained me. I saw that the sending it would be a great consolation to him, while the rousing suspicions to her disadvantage, since I had only suspicions to urge, might aggravate his misery for the fate of his wife, without rescuing him from Miss Alderton. I concluded, therefore, that it was better to let him send the letter, since it must be some time before she could again attempt to renew their intercourse.

‘I do not think their meeting was accidental on her part, as her brother knows that he frequently takes a walk alone, in the place where they met. She probably thought his wife had been so long dead, that she might venture to see him without shocking his feelings too much, and feared that longer separation might be dangerous to her interest. She has succeeded, I fear, in increasing his concern for her, and has drawn from him acknowledgments that he will think obligatory; which, if he should be too slow in remembering, she will remind him of

by more and more accidental meetings, till she finally accomplishes her purpose.—Is there no way to save him?—I wish anxiously for your advice.

‘I once hoped that the resentment he expressed at her mother, and the grief he has shown for his wife, would have prevented her wishing to recall him ; but the advantages which Mrs. Ornvillè’s death have opened to her view, outweigh the objections it has raised ; the latter she may hope to overcome ; the former are lasting and great.

‘His melancholy could hardly admit of increase, yet, since their meeting, it has assumed a new aspect, and I fear that he suffers a very painful conflict.’

“It is strange !” said he, after I had perused her letter, “of what various and complicated sensations, the human heart is susceptible ! I felt horror at the sight of Miss Alderton, at the very moment I was sensible she possessed a powerful influence over my affections.—Our meeting was most unfortunate ! it has deranged me dreadfully. I am never a moment well, but when immersed in occupations, that banish all remembrance of myself. If I think of Mrs. Alderton, it is with increased indignation. I

can now see, that her conduct was altogether selfish and base.—She led me by artful degrees to the fatal step she wished, and though I was at last bent on it myself, still it was with the intention of proceeding so cautiously, as would permit my retreating with safety, if I found that I ought not to persevere: her cruelty baffled my design, and plunged me in irremediable wretchedness!”

‘ Had I not, my dear Madam, been previously an enemy to voluntary divorces, Orville’s fate would have decided me against them. Were they permitted, what myriads of male and female Aldertons would appear to overwhelm mankind in misery!—But what do I say? Are they not partially allowed when an adulteress is permitted to marry her seducer? When encouragement is thus given to separations, which have for their object, only the indulgence of passion!—The prevalence of such marriages has rendered them less offensive to the public. The seduction of a wife is a venial offence. It excites the indignation of a few for a moment, but is soon forgotten, and its consequences, indeed, are seldom known.—During the American war, my brother suffered every hardship a soldier can sustain;—his consolation was the

hope of returning to the bosom of his family. When he did return, and found that his wife had been seduced, he died of a broken heart, but it was known only to myself.

‘Suicide is sometimes the consequence of a wife’s infidelity, but frequently have I seen it occasion a state of concealed and lingering misery, in which whole families were involved. A Frederic or a Lydia suffer or die, without the cause being even suspected except by a few.

‘I am, with the highest esteem,

‘Dear Madam,

‘Your most faithful friend,

London, May 3.

‘E. HANWAY.’

This letter destroyed the hopes which Mrs. Almorne had ventured to indulge of Frederic’s deliverance, and made her the more approve of Constantia’s removal to a distance, where she could hear nothing of him, except what she

thought proper to tell her. Time might enable her to bear the trial that too probably awaited her with regard to him, with more firmness than she could now do ; at all events, she would by absence, be spared much fruitless and premature anxiety.

But Mrs. Almoræ had a still stronger motive for being pleased with Constantia's departure. By a letter from Frederic, she was informed that Hastings meant to be at Ornaville in June, and that as soon as he had received the first visits of his neighbours, it was his intention to marry Sally Cusliffe, and bring her to the Abbey.

The story of the Will, not having been talked of by the family, had made little noise, and was no longer thought of even by those who knew it. Sir Robert Horndon and Mr. Edgeworth had not been able to obtain any information from Doyley, who now really appeared to be in a declining state of health, but continued so obstinately silent, that no discovery was to be expected from him, unless the nearer approaches of death should produce it.

No compensation had yet been offered to the

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legatees by Sir Hastings, but he had desired Frederic to let Mrs. Almorne know that he only delayed it till his arrival at Ornaville, when he meant to have a conference with her upon the subject.

Before this conference, Mrs. Almorne resolved that Constantia should be in Cumberland. She had written to Mrs. Delme, and received a most satisfactory answer, and she now endeavoured to busy the mind of Constantia with preparations for her journey. She made her select from her library the books she wished to have with her, which were immediately sent to Silver-Moss, that they might be in her power as soon as she arrived; and she proposed that she should not go directly from Delvin Lodge to Cumberland, but pass a week, on her way thither, at East-Green, the seat of Mr. Sealy, a friend of Mrs. Almorne's, whither she would accompany her.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON the eighteenth of May, Mrs. Almorne and Constantia left Delvin Lodge, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Tresilian. The two first days of their journey, they travelled slowly, but on the third, after separating from Tresilian and Louisa, they proceeded rapidly, and soon arrived at East Green in Somersetshire.

Mr. and Mrs. Sealy, who had been apprised of their coming, gave them a reception in the highest degree pleasing. Mrs. Almorne had given Constantia the most favourable impressions of them, which their behaviour now confirmed, while the peace and harmony, which reigned in their family, made her feel, that to see such harmony, was in some measure to be inspired with it.

The amiable solicitude of the whole family to soften the visible melancholy of Constantia, made her exert herself to conceal it, and prevented her from dwelling on the thoughts of her approaching separation from Mrs. Almorne.

She tried to forget her cares in contemplating the domestic felicity she saw, but sometimes it had a contrary effect. Never, thought she, will it be my fate to diffuse happiness on all around me, like Mrs. Sealy!—Never shall I, like her, be the companion of a man, whose society would be a consolation under any misfortune;—nor shall I ever be the mother of a group of sweet and innocent beings, from whom a single look would repay a world of cares!

When the week had elapsed, which Mrs. Almorne and Constantia had destined for their stay at East Green, Mr. and Mrs. Sealy earnestly requested them to prolong their visit, but Mrs. Almorne was obliged to return to Delvin Lodge, to wait the arrival of Lady Anson, and Constantia was anxious to be at Silver-Moss.

The night before their departure, Mrs. Almorne told Constantia, that she had no fear that

her absence from Delvin Lodge would be long :
“ But should I be mistaken, my love,” said she ;
“ should events render it proper for you to be
longer out of Kent than I expect, I will come
to you. I shall not do this till you have made
a sufficient trial of solitude ; but when that
period arrives, you may expect to see me.”

It is unnecessary to say,” replied Constantia,
“ how desirable our meeting must be to me ;
yet I can never consent to your coming to
Silver-Moss : You must not renounce the world
for me.”

“ With you,” returned Mrs. Almorne, “ re-
tirement would be no hardship ; on the con-
trary, I often wish for

“ A lodge in some vast wilderness,
“ Some boundless contiguity or shade,
“ Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
“ Of unsuccessful, or successful war,
“ Might never reach me more. My ear is pain’d,
“ My soul is sick with ev’ry day’s report
“ Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill’d.
“ There is no flesh in man’s obdurate heart ;
“ It does not feel for man.”

“Of all creatures, Constantia, man is the worst, and it will be long before he ceases to be so, but there are some benign spirits, and it is upon them that we must rest our thoughts. You will find Mr. and Mrs. Delme a venerable pair, and may perhaps meet with agreeable individuals in their neighbourhood. Even in a walk or ride, you may accidentally meet with persons whose acquaintance will be valuable.—Some of the most agreeable connections I have had, began in that casual manner.”

“Can I forget,” said Constantia, “that it was in this way, my acquaintance with Valmonsor commenced?”

- “Take every opportunity, my dear, of meeting with strangers; for, at your age, it is necessary to your improvement, and there are few persons, who will not offer something new to your consideration. As yet you have viewed mankind only from Ornaville Abbey; a point infinitely too limited to give you accurate knowledge of them. You have heard much, indeed, and you have read more, but personal experience is the best instructor. Attend to the conduct, and consider the situation of indivi-

duals ; view life by every means in which you can get a sight of it. You cannot yet imagine the innumerable ways, by which human beings are subjected to calamity,—nor even how many of the children of prosperity, lose their brightest days by ignorance of their good fortune. There are more people unfortunate without being unhappy, than there are persons, who enjoy happiness without having experienced misfortune.

Let your conduct to strangers be cautious, but your manner unreserved. The behaviour may be easy and open, without prudence being laid asleep : even with friends there is no occasion to commit ourselves improperly ; but life is too short for slow friendships.

As far as manner goes, treat no person, even on your first meeting with them, as a stranger ; respect every human being as having a claim to your benevolence, and conduct yourself to individuals without regard to their name, their country, or their religion. It is mind and character, not the accident of name or country, by which persons should be estimated ; and it is the devotion of the heart, not the form of religion, which constitutes the true spirit of it. Men must necessarily vary in their religious opinions ; and to be intolerant on account of

difference of judgment, is to arrogate to ourselves pretensions, of which a modest man would be incapable, and a wise one ashamed.

Carefully avoid, in general, all religious or political discussions ; for few who are zealous in religion are tolerant, and too many that are keen in politics, are interested. On the subject of the latter, be aware, that there are people of reputation, who will not scruple to assert what they neither believe themselves, nor expect that any well informed person can believe.

To guard yourself from being misled by the persons you converse with, consider well, before you allow their opinions to have much weight with you, what is their character and situation. The real disposition, and private circumstances of individuals cannot be easily known, but their public situation may be ascertained ; and from it, you may often know, how far they may, in some respects, be trusted. In general, be very slow in forming opinions of persons, either from their reputation, or the sentiments they deliver in conversation ; both are extremely fallacious ;—many intend to deceive,—many more deceive themselves.

I know two women in private life, who, though really unamiable, have yet obtained great

credit for active benevolence and love of virtue. The conduct of the one is guided by her husband, whom she loves; that of the other, by the love of admiration. Separate the first from her husband, and place the latter in the fashionable world, where admiration is to be attained by other means, and their true characters will quickly appear.—I have even seen men, who were exposed to the various scenes of public life, almost deified by their friends for judgment and worth, because these friends had no opportunity of seeing them act where their passions were deeply interested; for it is sometimes, only by touching a strong passion, that we can see characters fully displayed.

Although nothing can be more equivocal than the actions of men, yet it is chiefly by these that they must be judged; and your own natural discernment, with more experience of life, will enable you to determine the actions from which just conclusions may be drawn. They are not many, for good men will sometimes be betrayed into error, and bad men will perform good actions from selfish motives. One way of arriving at a pretty just knowledge of character, is by observing what a person does not do. A man of fortune, for example, may per-

form an act apparently generous, yet be guided by little views or momentary caprice ; but if he seldom or never does one, you may safely pronounce him an ungenerous man.

You must not however, be too fastidious in your general intercourse with mankind. It is fit that you should endeavour to appreciate them properly, and in the selection of intimate friends be cautious ; but with respect to others, remember the imperfection of our nature, and be content, if amidst the most extraordinary inconsistencies, you find that good preponderates.

On a future occasion, when we have more leisure, I will give you many examples of the fallaciousness of high reputation both in public and private life. It arises chiefly from mankind being at little pains to form their opinions from facts which cannot mislead ; an error which I anxiously wish to caution you against, as I think it a misfortune to society. It occasions mistakes fatal to the peace of individuals,—leads many to adopt false criterions of merit ; and induces men to think of building high reputation on specious pretences.

You will imagine, perhaps, that though the credit of a person may stand too high, it must still bear some proportion to his merit ; but this

is far from being the case. I can cite to you an instance of a man, who, without possessing any qualities which could justly entitle him to the appellation of great, obtained throughout the old and new world, the highest celebrity for wisdom, virtue, and magnanimity.

Though I was long inclined to believe him a man of considerable merit, yet I could not join in the general praise of him, because I never heard any thing in his favour, which appeared to me an unequivocal proof of superior talent or virtue; and I now know, that his character and conduct were in several respects incompatible with true virtue or greatness of mind.

It was his fate, during a long life, to be generally viewed at a distance, except by those who regarded him with partiality, or were interested in supporting his pretensions; but whoever has had an opportunity of viewing him near, and could do it impartially, must know, that he owed his vast reputation to a singular felicity of fortuitous circumstances;—to the success of the *great cause* in which he was engaged; to able counsellors, some talents, good sense, honesty, and discretion."

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. ALMORNE left East Green early in the morning, without taking leave of Constantia, who remained till after breakfast. She then bid adieu to Mr. and Mrs. Sealy and their family, from whom she parted with much regret, and set out for Cumberland in a post-chaise with Mrs. Stanbury, attended by James Pecket, an old domestic of Mrs. Almorne's.

Absorbed in thought, she passed the first day of her journey without seeing whether she went, but on the second, she endeavoured to turn her attention to the objects before her. Every step of the road was new,—every face was strange. Often did she gaze with curiosity on the travellers she passed, wishing she could arrest their course, and learn their history. What sad variety of wo, thought she, would be unfolded!—

—what strange complication of events ! Sometimes would be seen a life of unvarying insipidity,—perhaps an instance of rare felicity !

But her mind could not long dwell on the passing scene ; it returned to the contemplation of former times, rendered still more affecting by the dreary prospect the future presented.

—————“ From the sad years of life

“ We sometimes do short hours, yea minutes strike,

“ Keen, blissful, bright, never to be forgotten ;

“ Which thro’ the dreary gloom of time o’erpast,

“ Shine like fair sunny spots on a wild waste.

“ But few they are, as few the heav’n-fired souls,

“ Whose magic power creates them.”

The author of these lines, thought Constan-
tia as she repeated them, must be one of those
few !

Occupied alternately with the scenes before
her, or in reflections on the past, she arrived in
Westmoreland, where her attention became en-
grossed by the country she travelled. To hill
and dale, to rich and beautiful scenery, she had
been accustomed in Kent ; but to the wild and

mountainous views of Nature, she was a stranger, and she now saw them when the tone of her mind was peculiarly adapted to render them striking.

The objects she beheld, were grand and awful.—The lofty mountain she viewed with enthusiastic admiration, and saw with delight the wildest and most rugged scenes.—To her, they had charms, which would, perhaps at any moment, have elevated her mind, and inspired the sublimest feelings.

As she drew near the end of her journey, the road through which she passed, exhibited a variety of Alpine scenery; the majestic mountain, broken crag, and over-hanging rock, were contrasted with hills, whose verdant sides delighted and surprised her.

She travelled with increasing admiration of scenes so impressive, till after long winding through a valley, she arrived at Silver-Moss between six and seven o'clock in a most beautiful evening.

It was a small romantic spot, whose beautiful

sloping banks were covered with trees ; a brook meandered delightfully through the grounds, which were inclosed by mountains, that seemed to destine them for ever for the retreat of a few.

The house was simple and rural, yet possessing every appearance of comfort and convenience ; a fit habitation for such a place, where though all appeared the work of Nature, nothing seemed wanting for Art to supply.

Constantia felt some anxiety about Mr. and Mrs. Delme as she approached the house, but it was quickly removed by the appearance of both, the moment her carriage stopped at the door. They received her with the utmost cordiality, and she was instantaneously prepossessed in their favour ;—age and benevolence marked their appearance, and their manners were touchingly simple.

They had been in expectation of her arrival, and had every thing prepared that could contribute to her comfort ; but their praises of Mrs. Almorne, more than all their kind attentions, made her feel that she was with friends, and

she soon looked around with soothed and tranquil feelings.

The room in which she sat, was lighted from the west, and the softened rays of the sun gave inexpressible beauty to the scene.—She gazed alternately on the surrounding mountains, which promised seclusion from the world,—and on the benign looks and silver locks of Mr. Delme, which seemed to say, “Here you shall rest in peace.”

Mrs. Delme prepared a dish of tea, and Constantia, who had taken little refreshment during her journey, partook of the repast offered with more pleasure than she had long known.

After it, she strolled out a few minutes alone. All was still,—no sound but of the gurgling rivulet—no object that was not romantic and beautiful.—She felt herself in a new region, at an immense distance from the world she had left.

I have at length, said she, obtained the abode I desired ; I am in the retirement for which I sighed. How completely does change of situa-

tion alter our feelings!—I am the same being that I was six months ago,—yet every thing in the Creation seems different!

Recollections of the past, crowded on her mind, and filled her heart.—'To-morrow, said she, with a sigh, as she turned her steps towards the house, I shall spend in endeavouring to attain composure,—and the next,—and next, I shall converse with those inestimable friends, whose ashes are in the grave, but whose spirit still survives to enlighten mankind.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FATIGUED with her journey, and pleased with her abode, Constantia enjoyed a night of calm repose, and rose early in the morning, invigorated by sleep.

She went immediately abroad, and wandered as fancy guided, every moment more delighted with Silver-Moss, and the sweet tranquillity which reigned throughout the vale.

Except at breakfast, which she partook of with Mr. and Mrs. Delme, she spent the morning in walking or sitting in the fields. At dinner, she again joined Mr. and Mrs. Delme, and begged that she might always be permitted to do so.

The next morning she began her literary

pursuits; and though she could not read long with uninterrupted attention, it afforded her great satisfaction, and she pleased herself with the hope of acquiring much information during her retirement.

The following day, she carried materials for drawing abroad with her, and found a fertile source of entertainment in taking views of the beautiful surrounding scenery.

She soon extended her walks to a neighbouring village, where a new source of employment opened itself to her. Though only a hamlet, it contained inhabitants of all ages, and various descriptions. Some appeared prosperous and happy in a very humble sphere; others seemed suffering the pressure of calamity, and a few sinking calmly under age and infirmity.

Constantia visited several of the cottages, and returned to Silver-Moss, anxious to inquire of Mrs. Delme the character of their inhabitants.

Mr. and Mrs. Delme were well acquainted with them, and soon gave her the information she desired. A few were not so deserving as

could be wished, but most of them were worthy and industrious. Several were suffering severely from the hardships of the times ; others, from accidental misfortunes ; and though Mrs. Delme had done much for them during the winter, her limited income was very inadequate to the relief of their wants at so distressful a period.

Constantia wished to contract her own expenses into as small a compass as possible ; but for benevolent purposes, she meant to consider herself as the steward of Mrs. Almoré, and had been provided with money for the purpose. She now put a part of it into the hand of Mrs. Delme, and begged she would employ it, for the benefit of the cottagers, in the manner she thought proper.

Mrs. Delme gladly complied with her request, and immediately expended it for their relief, taking care at the same time to let them know to whom they were obliged, and that it was approbation of their conduct, as well as compassion for their sufferings, which had interested her in their favour.

Guided by the information of Mrs. Delme,

Constantia extended her acquaintance among the cottagers, and endeavoured from her own observations to discover various means of promoting their welfare, which led her to make frequent visits to the village.

One evening, as she was walking through it, a little girl, who was running past, fell at her feet, and cut her head against a stone. She instantly helped her up, and carried her into the nearest house, where the cut was found to be very slight, and the pain it occasioned soon subsided.

The cries of the child, however, alarmed the neighbours, and soon brought its mother into the house, in whom Constantia was surprised to see a lady of an uncommonly genteel and engaging appearance.

She thanked Constantia with much grace and propriety for the trouble she had taken with her daughter, while the manner in which she relieved her from the care of her, showed that she had the feelings of a mother.

Constantia conversed with her some time,

and became extremely prepossessed in her favour. She was dressed in deep mourning, and had a beautiful, though faded countenance, which seemed to have been impaired by sorrow alone, for she appeared to be very young.

When Constantia returned home, she informed Mrs. Delme of her interview with the lady, and inquired if she knew any thing of her.

"I know her well," replied Mrs. Delme; "her name is Heathton; she was the daughter of an intimate friend of mine, and is the widow of an officer, who died about eight months ago. It is to be with me, and in retirement, that she resides here; she is amiable and unfortunate, and wishes to be secluded from the world."

"But why," said Constantia, perceiving Mrs. Delme not inclined to say more, "does she not some times come to Siver-Mofs, since she wishes to be with you?"

"We meet in the village," answered Mrs. Delme; "she is unwilling to come here, because you are a stranger." .

"I hope," replied Constantia, "that she will not long consider me as one; I am grieved that I should lessen her comfort; but if you will permit me to carry her an invitation from you to-morrow, I hope that I shall prevail upon her to dine here."

"You will oblige me greatly," said Mrs. Delme, "for her absence has given me much concern."

CHAPTER XXV.

EARLY in the morning, Constantia waited upon Mrs. Heathton, and found little difficulty in persuading her to dine at Silver-Mofs.

After conversing with her a short time, she left her, still more pleased with her manners and conversation, and gratified with the hope of seeing her frequently.—“She is amiable and unfortunate,” said Constantia, upon quitting her; “would to heaven it were in my power to soften her misfortunes!”

At three o'clock, Mrs. Heathton came to Silver-Mofs, where she soon ceased to regard Constantia as a stranger; and, on parting in the evening, they mutually expressed a desire that they might often meet.

After Mrs. Heathton's departure, Mrs. Delme observed that she had never seen her so cheerful, and had no doubt the society of Miss Orville would have much effect in lessening her melancholy.

On receiving this encouragement, Constantia resolved to visit her as often as she could have any reason to believe her company would be acceptable, and the following evening called to invite her to walk.

Mrs. Heathton very readily assented, and seemed so much pleased with the request, that Constantia, on taking leave, entreated that their walk might be often renewed, as she understood that she led too sedentary a life.

Mrs. Heathton thanked her in a manner that showed she was much gratified by her attention.

Anxious to promote her welfare by any means in her power, Constantia called upon her several successive evenings, till rainy weather put a stop to their meeting.

CHAPTER XXVI.

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“**Y**ou can hardly imagine,” said Mrs. Heathton to Constantia, when the weather permitted the renewal of their intercourse, “how much I have felt your absence. Though the books you supplied me with, lightened some very heavy hours, yet when the evening came, and the rain assured me there was no hope of your appearing, my heart sunk, as if I had experienced for the first time, the most gloomy solitude. You have the power to charm me into forgetfulness of my cares, or at least into such soft sufferance of them as quiets my unhappy mind.”

“I rejoice,” replied Constantia, “that it is in my power to contribute to your comfort; it is at once gratifying to my heart, and flattering to my self-love, but solitude makes you over-rate the value of my society. We will not permit

you again to remain so long alone ; I am charged by Mr. and Mrs. Delme, to request that you will fix your abode at Silver-Moss, whenever the weather threatens to be unfavourable."

" I am but too much inclined to comply with their request," returned Mrs. Heathton ; " though it is not the dread of solitude which makes me prize your society. But it is not possible, Miss Ornvill, that any little attention from me can flatter you ? I am nothing ;—a deserted being, who belongs to no one, and to whom no one belongs ; who is poor and miserable,—can she flatter Miss Ornvill !"

" Is it possible," cried Constantia, eagerly, " that you can think we should be valued by adventitious circumstances ?"

" Oh ! Miss Ornvill," said Mrs. Heathton emphatically, " how much have I been mistaken in you !—I dreaded your coming to Silver-Moss, as an event which would totally deprive me of the peaceful asylum I had sought, where no fine lady, I thought, would ever come."

“How could you be afraid of me?” asked Constantia.

“Four years ago, when I was in Jamaica, a young officer, who was my near relation, came to it. A short time before he left England, his regiment had been quartered in Kent, where he had frequently seen you, and no subject was so pleasing to him as your praises. I encouraged him in it, as I saw that his passion for you, had only beneficial effects. It did not depress his spirit, yet when he could find me at leisure to listen to him, he would leave a company of the gayest young men over their bottle, to come and talk to me of Miss Ornaville. He represented her as the most charming woman in Kent, and the idol of her friends; he spoke much of her family, of their beautiful seat, of the hospitality which reigned there; of the elegance and splendour that surrounded her,—and of every thing, in fine, which was connected with Miss Ornaville.—When therefore, I heard that this same Miss Ornaville was coming to Silver-Moss, I considered her too much the child of Fashion and Fortune, to fancy that she would not neglect me.”

"If you trusted the accounts of your friend, how could you think so?"

"I trusted him in every particular, but his opinion of you; there, I thought, the eye of a lover might be deceived; besides, I imagined that four years more of high life, might have changed you from the woman he represented, into all that is repulsive in a woman of fashion."

"But you must surely have heard from Mrs. Delme of the loss of my parents, and that I could no longer be the happy woman your friend had seen."

"I heard indeed of your loss, and that you wished for a while, to exchange the gay scenes of Kent for retirement; but still I thought you must be far, very far from being a fit companion for a Child of Poverty and Misfortune."

"How strangely," thought Constantia, "are we sometimes mistaken!"

"The morning after your arrival," continued Mrs. Heath ton, "Mrs. Delme came very kindly

to tell me, that I had nothing to fear from you, for your manners were the most engaging, that could be imagined. Her account, however, did not satisfy me. Her age, your being her guest, and both the friends of Mrs. Almorne, would, I thought, secure your good behaviour to her. Your conduct to the poor cottagers, did more to convince me you were praise-worthy, but did not assure me, that you might not treat me with disdain. I have seen many fine ladies behave with the greatest affability to a peasant, yet show the women, who approached their own station the utmost hauteur. I have seen too much of the insolence of rank and fortune, even in those who pretend to liberal sentiments,—too much of the caprice of people of fashion, who condescend to know you to-day, and will not deign to recognise you to-morrow, to risk aggravating my misfortunes, by subjecting myself to their arrogant neglect.—Whenever I saw you approach the village, I shut myself up in my own little apartment, and shrunk into nothing until you were gone.”

“ Good heaven !” exclaimed Constantia,
“ have I thus been disturbing your tranquillity,

while I was fancying myself unnoticed and unknown !”

“ How, my dear Miss Ornvill, could you suppose yourself unnoticed or unknown ? You, who are the favourite both of Nature and Fortune.”

“ Are you certain, Madam, that I am a favourite of Fortune ?”

“ How can I doubt it ? You are suffering indeed from affliction, but it is affliction, which in the course of Nature was inevitable. You have still many near relations all in prosperity, who must be equally fond and proud of you, and if you grieve for those you have lost, you may also rejoice, that you cannot disappoint or distress them.”

Mrs. Heathton changed colour as she said this, which led Constantia to fear that she suffered from self-reproach.

“ You will recollect,” replied Constantia, “ what Mr. Delme said the other day ; that

every one had something to disturb them, and if it was not a great evil, they often contrived to view it with microscopic eyes."

"Yes, but as yet you can hardly have suffered any distress, which it was in your power to magnify into a great one, unless indeed, you have been disappointed in your affections."

"I have never been disappointed in affection," replied Constantia, colouring in her turn.

"You have never," said Mrs. Heathton, "known poverty or dependence,—never—but I will forbear to enumerate distresses, to which you must be a stranger; let me not depress your spirit by painful comparisons."

"We shall not dwell on the evils of life at present," answered Constantia; "but let me ask why, though I had been the vainest, or proudest of human beings, you should have shrunk into nothing at my approach?—The more I was weak or vain, the less I should have deserved your consideration, and surely you do not require to be told, that if I had understanding or worth, you must command my respect."

“ I fear, Miss Ornvill, you do not know the world, when you speak thus. You are secure yourself from its contempt, and little know how much its favour depends on situation.”

“ If I have not personally experienced, I must at least have seen the way of the world. There are certainly situations, which expose us more than others, to supercilious neglect or insolence ; but what rank, or condition, is secure from ill-bred or contemptuous behaviour, even from those, who have no title to show it ?——I have seen persons of very high station, suffer in this way severe mortification from their inferiors, at the very moment that I have seen my father turn off a footman, for treating with insolence as his inferior, the plain servant of a gentleman of small fortune.——Few regulate their conduct by a due regard to rank or merit ;—fanciful ideas of superiority are entertained from high to low, till the whole becomes the play of puppets, and should be regarded with indifference and contempt.”

“ It should,—but it is not easy.”

“ Not easy when forced into disagreeable so-

ciety, but in private, at least, we may feel all the dignity and independence of conscious worth. Have a juster opinion of your own merit, my dear Mrs. Heathton, than to rate yourself by the little views of little people."

"Is not the conduct of even amiable and sensible persons often influenced by adventitious circumstances?"

"It is: they are not always firm enough to oppose the current; but this is an evil to be deplored, not yielded to. Besides, you may rest assured, that this never happens without some latent weakness of mind, or littleness of heart, which should excite pity, if not contempt.

Adventitious circumstances are no part of you. They may benefit, but the want of them ought not to mortify.—There must be a distinction of ranks, and I would neither intrude into a company for which my station unfitted me, nor although entitled to a place in genteel society, would I appear in it improperly drest; but those, who would condemn me, because I was plain in my garb, or humble in my fortune, I would despise and forsake.—You will tell me,

that this is mere talking, and the world would certainly laugh did it hear me ; but I firmly believe, that I should feel as proud and independent in mind, though I were obliged to toil for my subsistence, as if I were the mistress of thousands. I should regard the want of fortune, as I would the loss of my arm by an accident ; it would subject me to numberless deprivations, but not to any sense of humiliation."

"How few, how very few, have such greatness of mind !"

"In me, my dear friend, this is merely the effect of instruction. I express my sentiments to raise you to a just sense of your worth, but I deserve no praise, for I only repeat the lessons of my father and Mrs. Almorne."

"Mrs. Almorne may give advice, but she cannot give conduct. In you is to be seen a union of the rarest qualities ; affability with dignity, gentleness with firmness——"

"Stop !" cried Constantia ; "I will not listen to the dictates of blind partiality."

"If it is partiality, it is produced entirely by your excellence. No one, who has seen you once, will ever approach you with fear, or without respect. Ever forgetful of yourself, you study the happiness——"

"If you talk thus," said Constantia, rising, "I can hear no more ; but I request as a proof of your good opinion, that you will come to Silver-Moss, as often as you did before my arrival."

"I cannot refuse so agreeable a request. In your society, I feel that I acquire a firmness which I never knew before ; guided by your opinions, and supported by your goodness, I trust that I shall rise superior to the littleness of others."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONSTANTIA returned to Silver-Moss, much happier than she had been any day since her arrival. She had not only found the tranquillity she expected, but great and unlooked-for satisfaction ; and now experienced what Mrs. Almorne had often told her, how easy it sometimes was to administer relief to the unhappy. In the cottagers, she saw a number of poor people placed in comfort, without any trouble, and at a small expense ; their worth rewarded, their industry encouraged by her bounty ; their habits and domestic occupations improved by her instructions. In Mrs. Heathton, she saw an amiable and unhappy woman, to whom her company was a blessing, and whose misfortunes, she hoped, it might yet be more effectually in her power to soften.

She had no sooner been informed by Mrs. Delme, that Mrs. Heathton was suffering from extreme poverty, than she wrote of her to Mrs. Almorne, earnestly entreating that she would take her under her protection, and let no regard to her (Constantia's) interest, prevent her from providing for a far more unfortunate and necessitous individual.—To this letter she hoped in a few days to receive an answer, and had no doubt it would prove favourable.

The next morning Mrs. Delme informed her, that she had received a note from Mrs. Heathton, requesting that she would make known to Miss Orville the chief events of her life, that she might be fully acquainted with the conduct of the person, for whom she kindly interested herself.

“She is the daughter,” continued Mrs. Delme, “of Mr. Derwent of Walnut-Bank in Sussex. When she was twelve yearsold, her mother died, and her father, who had always been a most affectionate parent, became then more than ever assiduous in his care of her, and did every thing in his power to supply the loss of her mother.

Near seven years ago, when she was scarce-

ly sixteen, she became acquainted with Captain Heathton, who soon engaged her affections, and persuaded her to marry him, without the consent of her father.

Mr. Derwent objected to the marriage on account of her youth, and Heathton's having no property but his commissiõn; while his profession would expose her to hardships for which she was unfit, and would deprive him for ever of her society.

He was so much displeased with her acting in opposition to his wishes, that he refused to see her after the marriage, and they have never since had any intercourse; and she was so much hurt with his refusal to see her, that she was never afterwards happy.

She soon went to the West Indies with her husband, where he fell into a habit of drinking, which aggravated her distrefs, and the effects of the climate, added to grief, threw her into bad health.

She had a son, who was extremely delicate, and his state made her feel severely the hardships of poverty. He soon died, and she then became so ill, that her physician declared her only chance of recovery was returning to Europe. Captain Heathton's finances, however,

put it out of his power to be at the expense of the voyage, and she must soon have followed her infant, had it not been for the generous behaviour of an acquaintance. Captain Valmonsor saw and pitied the situation of Mrs. Heathton, and, in the most delicate and generous manner, gave her husband money to relieve all their difficulties, and convey his wife to England, where she soon recovered.

Many of these circumstances I was told by herself, but others I was informed of by a cousin she had in Jamaica, who, knowing the interest I took in her fate, thought it right to make me fully acquainted with her situation.

Upon her arrival in England, Mr. Delme and I went to Liverpool, and brought her here, where she remained till her husband's return home with his regiment. She then joined him, and they continued together until he went on the expedition to Holland. Although not wounded there, the hardships he underwent were too much for his constitution; he fell into a lingering state of bad health, and died eight months ago, leaving her unprovided, and old in affliction at twenty-two.—An early age to have only misery in prospect!

Soon after Captain Heathton's death, we pre-

vailed upon her to come hither, which she consented to until she could adopt some plan of life for the support of herself and her daughter, and it is with difficulty we have persuaded her to postpone this a little longer, till her child, who has had the hooping cough, might be perfectly restored to health.

On receiving the letter from Mrs. Almorne, which informed us of your wish to come to Silver-Moss, she immediately proposed to retire to the village, both as it might not be agreeable to you to find her here, and would be painful to herself to meet with you. We were much distressed with the thoughts of her removal, but could not overcome her objections to remaining."

"But why not refuse my visit," said Constantia, "rather than subject her to inconvenience?"

"We could not refuse a request of Mrs. Almorne's, unless it had obliged Mrs. Heathton to leave us entirely; and we were not without hope, that you might be different from what she imagined. I was no sooner convinced of this, than I began to contrive how I could best

bring you acquainted, when your accidental meeting anticipated my design."

"I will go to her immediately," said Constantia, "and will not leave her till she consents to become again an inhabitant of your dwelling."

Hardly had Constantia left the house with this intention, before she found herself inclined to take a circuitous course to the village. The recital of Mrs. Heathton's misfortunes, had interested her more than ever in her fate, but the mention of Valmonsor had strongly agitated her, and excited a variety of sensations. The hearing he had done an act, which in his situation was so truly generous, gratified her highly ;—yet she would have felt herself happier, if the object of his care had been less young and handsome.—She believed—she was certain, that he had acted from motives of the purest humanity,—but still she wished that his humanity had been excited by a different person.

With delight she reflected, that she had been interesting herself for the object of his concern ;—Mrs. Heathton's being the friend of Valmonsor,

spread an indescribable charm over her ;—yet she felt that she could not speak of him to her, nor should like to hear him spoken of by Mrs. Heathton.

She lingered long on the road, before she arrived, with a beating heart, at her door. For the first time, she entered with embarrassment, and, taking her by the hand, while a deep blush suffused her face, she said, “ I come, my friend, to accuse you of unkindness in having so long concealed from me, your having been an inhabitant of Silver-Moss ; you must compensate by returning with me now, to quit it no more till you leave it with myself ; we shall stay, and go together.”

Mrs. Heathton made no answer, but fell on her neck and wept.

This action instantaneously changed the feelings of Constantia. Valmonsor was forgotten ; and folding Mrs. Heathton in her arms, she used every consolatory expression that could soothe her feelings.

“ Oh ! Miss Ornvill,” said Mrs. Heathton,

“you do not know what you are to me!—Heaven sent you to comfort me, though I have not deserved so great a blessing,—I broke the heart of my father!”

This was a point on which Constantia did not know how to speak; for she felt that she could never have forgiven herself, if she had injured her father's peace.

“Before I was married,” said Mrs. Heathton, “there was not a day unmarked by his kindness,—it was his constant endeavour to make me happy,—yet I deserted him!”

“You were not aware of the consequences of what you did,” said Constantia.

“I was not; but still I ought never to have disobeyed him. He would not have desired me to marry against my inclination, and I ought never to have married against his.”

“The errors of sixteen,” said Constantia, “are surely pardonable. Women are unfortunately often tempted to decide on the most momentous concerns, before they are capable of knowing what they ought to do.”

"Love," replied Mrs. Heathton, "is a delightful, but deluding affection. When well placed, it may have the happiest effects upon our conduct, but our choice often depends on we know not what. The ties of love are impenetrable—were it even the offspring of esteem, we ought not to be guided by it in opposition to the will of such a parent as mine."

"Your offences have been expiated by suffering," said Constantia.

"My father may forgive them," replied Mrs. Heathton; "but nothing can console me for having afflicted him. I mourned his displeasure deeply from the moment I incurred it, but I little knew what he suffered, till I became myself a parent. The more I love my child,—the more I am careful and anxious about her,—the more severely do I feel my error.—I even fear to enjoy the comfort she gives me, lest, after cherishing her with unremitting tenderness for twenty years, she should forget me for an acquaintance of a few days or weeks.—She has taught me, how deep and incurable the wound must be, which is inflicted by disappointment in a child."

“ You must not anticipate misfortune, my dear friend ; I trust your sorrows will be alleviated by reconciliation with your father.”

“ How dare I expect it? I once thought that the loss, I have lately sustained, would have softened his displeasure,—but I was mistaken.”

“ Did you inform him of it ?”

“ I durst not ; but I took care to have it inserted in all the newspapers, which he constantly reads,”

“ Should you not make some attempt to conciliate him ?”

“ O no !—for it would be mistaken for the supplication of poverty.—If my situation does not speak for me, nothing, I could say, would.”

“ It should speak for you.”

“ Sometimes I think that if he knew what I have suffered, he would not be unkind. Patiently should I submit to any misfortune, were I but permitted to watch over the declining years of

my father. The loss of my husband, I mourn chiefly for my own sake ; but separation from my father, I lament also for his ; for he is old and infirm, and has no family to comfort and sustain him. When I married, he had sons, but they are no more,—and he has no daughter but myself.”

Constantia ventured not to give Mrs. Heathton the hopes which she indulged of her reconciliation with her father. The moment she had heard his name, she flattered herself it might be possible to obtain his forgiveness for his daughter. She knew that Mrs. Almorne had lately become well acquainted with him, and that he esteemed her highly ; she therefore hoped through her good offices, to see Mrs. Heathton restored to his favour, and she determined to attempt it immediately.

After obtaining Mrs. Heathton's promise that she would that evening fix her residence at Silver-Moss, she herself returned to it, to write to Mrs. Almorne. She gave her the story of Mrs. Heathton, and related the conversation she had just had with her, simply as it occurred. She added every thing from herself that could

interest Mrs. Almoré in her favour, and entreated a speedy answer, resolving in the meanwhile to conceal from Mrs. Heathton what she had done, lest she should raise hopes, which might be disappointed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MRS. HEATHTON was now an inhabitant of Silver-Moss, and in the exercise of kind attentions to her, and the hope of restoring her to her father, Constantia's bosom glowed with delight. The sense of her own misfortunes was softened by sympathy with those of others, and no day passed in which she had not the consolation of receiving, or of giving comfort to some human being.

An answer from Mrs. Almorne was longer in coming than she expected, but in a short time the following letter arrived.

‘ To Miss ORNVILLE.

‘ I was on the point of answering your first
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letter about Mrs. Heathton, my dear Constantia, when I received your second, which determined me to delay writing till I had seen Mr. Derwent.

‘ The next morning, I set out for the house of his friend and neighbour, Mr. Hobhouse, where I had become acquainted with him. On my arrival, I found that Mr. Derwent had lately had a severe illness, but was now so well as to venture abroad, and through the good offices of Mr. Hobhouse, I soon obtained an interview with him.

‘ It is unnecessary to detail all our conversation. I led by degrees to the point I wished, and when I thought him sufficiently prepared for the question, I ventured to ask, if he knew where his daughter was ?

‘ He said he supposed at C——, where her husband’s regiment was quartered.

‘ Surprised at his answer, I inquired if he did not know that Captain Heathton was dead ?

‘ He replied, “ No ; ” and seemed thunder-struck with the intelligence.

‘ I told him when he died, and that his death was in the newspapers.

‘ He said he had been on a journey at the time, which had prevented his seeing them, and that his friends had probably been silent on the

subject, from supposing he did not wish to speak of it.

‘ He then inquired with such visible concern about his daughter, that I saw I should have little more to do than to put your letters into his hands. They were not necessary to awaken his affection, but I thought them the best means of giving him a just view of Mrs. Heathton.

‘ The first affected him very painfully ;—over the latter, he wept with emotions which would have delighted you for your friend.

‘ When his feelings were a little calmed, he told me, that he had always pitied, while he condemned her, but that he had refused to see her, because he thought it proper to show disapprobation of her conduct, and still more, because he was offended with her husband, and could not separate their interests. Extreme youth and ignorance were great palliations of her errors ; and now that he had such proofs of her goodness and affection, she would be more than ever the blessing of her father.

‘ His health does not permit him to undertake the journey, or he would go instantly to Cumberland, but we have agreed that James Pecket shall be sent to Silver-Moss, and that he and Mrs. Stanbury shall attend Mrs.

Heathton and her daughter to Delvin-Lodge, whence I shall accompany them to Walnut-Bank.

‘ You may expect him immediately, and you will prepare Mrs. Heathton to receive by him a letter from her father, inviting her return.’

‘ I have but this moment parted from Mr. Derwent, and write in haste that I may not miss this day’s post ; I have therefore time for no more, but shall soon write again.

Your’s,

July 5th.

H. A.

Cautious as Constantia was in communicating to Mrs. Heathton the welcome intelligence which this letter contained, yet it nearly overpowered her. Though transported with joy at the prospect of being restored to her father, her satisfaction was mingled with much fear and

anxiety at the thoughts of their meeting: he every moment rose to her view, as an awful being, whom she wished, yet dreaded to approach.

The arrival of Pecket with the expected letter, relieved and reassured her. The sight of her father's well-known hand, inviting her to come to him, and expressing the same tender affection, which she had formerly experienced from him, softened her apprehensions, and permitted her to indulge in joy. It was, however, a joy which was only to be known by her appearance; her feelings were of too complicated a kind to be expressed, but the beam of gratitude which brightened her eye, whenever she looked at Constantia, powerfully spoke the emotions of her heart.

Anxious to lose no time in returning to her father, she left Silver-Moss the evening of the day on which she received his letter, after taking leave of Mr. and Mrs. Delme, and Constantia, in a manner that showed the deep sense she had of their goodness.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE satisfaction which Constantia felt from the happy change in Mrs. Heathton's situation, almost banished, for some time after her departure, the sense of other cares ; but they were renewed with more than ordinary force, by the failure of a letter from Mrs. Almorne, several days after she expected it. Her silence was so unusual, that she could not help fearing it proceeded from some extraordinary cause, and various circumstances conspired to increase her apprehensions.

In the two last letters she had received from her, no mention had been made of any of her family, though it was highly probable that her eldest brother was then at Ornvile ; neither had she once, since their separation, spoken of Valmonsor, although it was long past the time that

she had expected to hear of him, and she could have no doubt that Sir Esmond was now at Delvin Lodge.

But what most of all confirmed her fears, was the silence of Louisa. For a month after they parted, Mrs. Tresilian had written twice a week, and had promised to do so regularly; but it was now above a fortnight since she had received a line from her. It was therefore evident, that there must be a more than ordinary cause for her silence; some new distress probably prevented both her and Mrs. Almorne from writing, but whence it proceeded, she was at a loss to determine.

Her fears, ever tremblingly alive for Frederic, made her at first imagine, that the renewal of his intercourse with Miss Alderton was the misfortune to be expected, and this opinion was strengthened, from believing that Mrs. Almorne's delicacy would prevent her interfering in his affairs so much as could be wished.

It was one of the excellencies of Mrs. Almorne, that she seldom obtruded her opinions

unsolicited, and even when they were requested, often declined giving them, when she thought her interference could be any way improper. Though her unwearied benevolence made her daily the benefactor of many, yet the obligations she conferred never imposed restraint on the persons obliged ; they found themselves as much at liberty to act independently of her, as their own sense of gratitude and respect for her opinions would permit.

From this view of Mrs. Almorne, Constantia was little encouraged to hope for the safety of Frederic through her power over him ; but, on reflection, she saw that whatever might be privately his situation with Miss Alderton, Louisa could not know it, and that she must therefore seek some other explanation of her silence. She then concluded, that Mrs. Almorne had received from Sir Esmond some unpleasant intelligence of Valmonsor, which they wished to be as slow in communicating as possible.

Unfortunately for Constantia, she was a marker of days, and her melancholy apprehensions were rendered more painful, by its being

the season in which she had passed some of her happiest hours with Valmonsor. So strong an impression had the preceding summer made upon her mind, that hardly an hour elapsed which did not recall to her memory, with double force, scenes which could never return.

CHAPTER XXX.

MORE and more alarmed by the continued silence of her friends, Constantia passed a sleepless night in painful conjectures, and in retracing in her mind the various events which had, in so short a period, produced a revolution in the state of almost every member of her family.

With the first dawn of light she arose, to banish her mournful reflections by employment. As soon as she was dressed, she attempted to find her way out of the house, but was obliged to return to her apartment to wait the appearance of the servants.

The sun was rising with the utmost splendour, and for a long time she was absorbed in contemplating the grandeur of the sight, and the inimitable colouring of sky which preceded

the bright effulgence of light.—As the colours varied, and gradually diminished in force, her mind reverted to the former objects of her thoughts, and her fancy busied itself in bringing in array before her the persons she loved.

To revisit Delvin Lodge or Tresilian Vale in imagination, was easy ; but to form an idea of Valmonsor's situation was impossible.—

“ O sun !” she exclaimed, “ of this great world both eye and soul !”—where will thy rays shed their influence upon Valmonsor ?—Whether will they find him peaceful and safe, or encompassed with difficulty and danger ?——”

Afraid to indulge the train of ideas her fears excited, she rose suddenly, and again sought her way out of the house.

It was near six o'clock, and she wandered without observing whither she went, till she came to a seat at a distance from the house. It was placed under the spreading branches of an oak, and commanded a beautiful view of the valley to the south. Here she sat down, and

had remained but a few minutes before she saw a gentleman approaching, whose appearance at a distance struck her as one she was acquainted with; but as he drew near, and hastily advanced, she discovered him, to her utter amazement, to be Valmonsor.

Astonishment rooted her to her seat, and almost overpowered her senses;—while he, seeing her agitation, threw himself at her feet, and entreated her forgiveness for surprising her so abruptly.

Constantia could not speak,—hardly could she make a sign to him to be seated.

He placed himself beside her, but for a while neither of them spoke.—Constantia at length recovering herself, asked, how he had come there?

“By the permission,” he answered, “of Mrs. Almorne, who allowed me to come, without telling me what reception I should meet with.—Miss Orville,” said he with fervour, “you see me before you, wholly dependent—every

comfort of my existence, dependent upon you."

His voice faltered—a countenance pale as death, and the agitation of his whole frame, spoke his emotion.

"Am I then," he exclaimed, "once more permitted to behold you!—how often have I repeated your beloved name, when separated from you by a dreadful distance! I have gazed on it for hours, and repeated it a million of times, while my tortured imagination was filled with inexpressible fears for your safety, and for——"

He stopt; but soon recovering himself, he avowed for her, in the tenderest language, the most devoted attachment.

Constantia heard him, almost without believing her imagination did not deceive her; the surprise and agitation he had thrown her into, occasioned a confusion of feeling, which made her doubt the impression of her senses,—but by degrees she became more composed, and he obtained from her at length a full acknowledgment of her affection.

His feelings at the moment, were too powerful for expression, and again they were both silent.

"Beloved by you, Miss Ornvillè ;" resumed he, "rich in your affection, I could bid defiance to almost any suffering,—but it is death to part from you, and how dare I hope you will unite your fate to mine, when my whole property is my commission?"

"If I had fortune," said Constantia, "I should rejoice in your want of it, but you must have heard of my misfortunes?"

"I have, and they made me more eager to come here, though I knew not how I could hope that you would listen to me."

"As we are situated," said Constantia, "we must part."

"O! say not so," cried Valmontor, "speak not such words, I implore you!—But why do I presume to solicit your consideration without explaining my past conduct! Whatever may be my destiny, I thank Heaven, for having put

in my power to lay my heart open to your view.—You ought to know every circumstance by which I have been guided, since the first hour of our meeting.—That hour was almost decisive of my fate. I was so charmed, that I forgot every thing but the happiness of seeing you, till it was too late.—In the same instant that I was conscious how entirely my peace was dependent upon you, I became sensible that it was impossible to aspire to your hand. A train of circumstances convinced me, that you could not, and ought not for my sake, to sacrifice the comforts you possessed.

I shall forbear to dwell on the misery this conviction occasioned me. I believe you saw it in some degree, when I told you my intention of leaving Ramsgate —The concern, which I imagined, you discovered for me, changed my design. If our regard was mutual, I thought I ought to leave to you the determination of my fate. Though I had no fortune to offer, I endeavoured to persuade myself, that we might be happy, if you could accommodate yourself to my situation.

While I remained deliberating how to act, the conversation, which we had in our walk from Oak Hill, decided my conduct. Your be-

haviour that day inspired me with hope, and determined me to declare to you the state of my mind, and be governed entirely by you. .

It was with this intention that I proposed the excursion to Willowfield. Unfortunately, the mistakes I was led into by Miss Hargrave, threw me again at a distance. We easily dread disappointment in what we ardently wish. Ever miserably alive to my fears about you, I became the dupe of appearances, which, to my jealous apprehension, seemed decisive ; and although I was at length undeceived, it was not till an unexpected order to leave the kingdom, frustrated all my hopes. I had the prospect of soon obtaining a majority in another regiment, which would probably be long stationed in England, and this I had flattered myself, would induce your friends the more readily to consent to my wishes ; but fortune seemed resolved to disappoint me, by not even allowing me leisure before my departure, to consider properly what I ought to do.—It was wretchedness to leave you without an explanation, yet how could I attempt it ? Could I suppose, after hearing the sentiments of your brother, that your friends would resolve in the course of a few days, to relinquish you to a poor wanderer?—or

ought I to propose to hurry you from them, and expose you suddenly to the hardships of a soldier's life?—Yet it appeared still more improper to involve you in a clandestine engagement,—or even to lay you under the embarrassment, which might be the consequence of an eclairsissement.—Your father had treated me with the most generous hospitality; had shown me the most distinguishing marks of esteem, to which he had been led by the favourable testimony of my friend, and could I return the confidence of both, by wounding your father in his tenderest affections?—Miss Hargrave had given me erroneous impressions of you, but not of him; for my own observations confirmed all that she said. I saw that you were the idol of his affections, and to interrupt his comfort in you, was to plunge a dagger into his heart.—I left you therefore, without explanation, and without even the consolation of knowing that I did right.—What a conflict did I experience! I departed wretched in the extreme.

It was my intention to write, if I could not come to you, the instant I obtained the expected majority, and could speak decisively of my destination. Happily, I was not long in

Gibraltar before I was promoted, and at liberty to return.

The moment I arrived in England, my first care was to meet with Sir Esmond Anson, from whom I had received a letter, which was the only satisfaction I experienced in absence.

Upon inquiring for him in town, I was informed that he was at Delvin Lodge; whither I resolved to follow him immediately, that I might know your situation before I ventured to wait upon you. I had no suspicion of the events which had taken place in my absence, but I was afraid of others that would be death to me.

When I got to Ramsgate, I sent a note to Sir Esmond requesting to see him, and though I waited his coming with agonizing anxiety, I had not courage in the interim to make a single inquiry about you. I scarce breathed from terror when we first met, but conjecturing immediately the cause of my perturbation, he told me that you were well, and still Miss Orville. He then informed me of your misfortunes, and of your having left Kent. I told him my intentions, and that I was resolved to follow you wherever you were. He approved my design, but said that it would first be proper for me to

wait upon Mrs. Almorne, and proposed my going instantly to Delvin Lodge.

There she received me with the greatest politeness, and told me the place of your residence, but said nothing of the object of my visit.

I left Delvin Lodge early the next morning, and travelled with the utmost expedition till I arrived last night about eleven o'clock, at the neighbouring village. Finding that it was then too late to intrude upon you, I waited impatiently the return of day. With the rising sun I came hither, and wandered about your abode, till I might be permitted to wait upon you. On inquiring for you at six o'clock, I was overjoyed to find you were abroad, but the servant could not inform me where, and I followed as fancy led, without my impatience suffering me to reflect, how much I might surprise you."

Valmonsor paused, but Constantia remained silent.

"Can you not, Miss Ornvillc," cried he, after a short interval, "speak one word of comfort."

"Would to heaven!" said Constantia, "that you were a tiller of the earth in this little spot!"

"Could you then," exclaimed Valmonsor, "relinquish the world for such a retirement!"

"With you, I should think it no sacrifice."

"Could you for me live in solitude, and renounce all the pleasures to which you have been accustomed?"

"To study your comfort," replied Constantia, emphatically, "would be infinitely greater happiness to me, than all those pleasures, which are so generally prized."

Valmonsor's gratitude for this acknowledgement was boundless, and prevented for a while, all thoughts of the future.

"Let us then," cried he, at length, "abandon the world; I will instantly dispose of my commission, and we shall some where find a happy asylum."

"I love you too well," said Constantia, "to

expose you to such a risk. To me, retirement may be easy, for domestic occupations are my proper employments, but what might not you suffer from so great a change?"

"I do not propose for myself a life of idleness," cried Valmonsor, "I shall find in retirement some laudable employment, and you know how little my profession is agreeable to me.—In seeing you, there is a charm, which would compensate for every deprivation!—Yet I ought not, perhaps, to urge our union. Were I certain that you would not suffer from it, there are no dangers to myself, even supposing they were numerous, which I would not joyfully encounter,—but can I involve you in distress?"

"For myself," said Constantia, "I fear neither poverty nor solitude, but our marrying immediately, without either more fortune, or the probable means of improving it, might plunge us in the deepest distress.—You have shown that you could sacrifice your feelings to your sense of what was right;—let me now, have the same title to your approbation."

"Your words have an irresistible power over me ; I listen with admiration, at the very moment they fill me with anguish."

"In a few years," said Constantia, "Mrs. Almorne may be enabled to make us independent."

"Years!" repeated Valmonsor, "if you knew what I have suffered in absence, you could not speak of a separation of years!—To think that we might meet, has been my only consolation. Every thought—every wish, every feeling of my heart, has been regulated by you.——I fancied that to see you once more,—to explain my conduct, and declare my devotion, would render me happy,—yet now, even now, when I am with you, I tremble lest I deceive myself—lest I only fancy that you love me ; I would have the expressions of your affection always repeated."

"Is it possible that you can *now* doubt it!"

"You can speak of separation!"

“The more I regard you, the less I should forgive myself for hazarding your future peace. Let us hope from a short time a favourable change of circumstances, but let not the fear of present misery blind us to the future. I am happy in my affection for you,—it must not be the occasion of self reproach ;—from that worst of evils, let us preserve ourselves.”

Valmonsor grasped her hand without answering, and she was again beginning to address him, when she was prevented by the appearance of a servant, whom Mrs. Delme, alarmed at her long absense, had sent in search of her.

She immediately rose, and returned with Valmonsor to the house.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. and MRS. DELME were waiting breakfast for Constantia, who introduced Valmonsor to them, but finding herself unable to appear with the tranquillity she wished, she made an apology for leaving them, and withdrew to the chamber, which she had lately quitted with sensations so very different from those she now experienced on returning to it.

She was so much struck with the change that she could hardly believe it to be real.—“Is it possible,” she cried, “that Valmonsor, when I imagined the ocean divided us, should have been like myself, watching the return of day, on the banks of Silver-Moss!—It is illusion all!”

But soon the certainty of his being near, made her exclaim, "Has then the explanation I so earnestly desired,—which I fancied all that was wanting to my happiness, come at last, when it can no longer avail!—Is the moment that I discover Valmonsor to be what I wish, the one in which I must relinquish him?—O Sir Esmond! ought I to owe him to you!"

The opening of the door interrupted her reflections, and a servant entered with a packet, which Valmonsor had brought from Mrs. Almorne, but had forgotten to deliver.

Constantia took the packet eagerly, and breaking it open, found under cover the following letter:

‘ TO MISS ORNVILLE.

‘ My beloved Constantia,—dearest object of my affection! hardly can the meeting with Valmonsor, give you more pleasure, than it has done me,—my wishes are fulfilled; he is returned worthy of your affection.

‘ Inclosed you have a deed, which will render you independent. It was executed soon after

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I knew of your attachment, but I concealed it then, that you might make a trial of his character and affection,—and I concealed it since, that you might know yourself. I had no doubt of your merit, but I wished its lustre to be shown by adversity ; and that you might be taught the full value of the comforts of life, by the temporary deprivation of them.

‘ Hesitate not to accept the sum I offer, from believing I could employ it more beneficially. In your possession, it will be destined to the best purposes.—You, who have ever had “ a tear for pity, and a hand open as day to melting charity,” will, when I am no more, remember the children of affliction, and the wishes of

‘ HONORIA ALMORNE.’

Upon opening the packet, Constantia found a deed of gift for thirty thousand pounds.

This was a morning destined to try her feelings. Gratitude, joy, and wonder, almost be-

rest her of her faculties.—She sat for some time in a delirium of feeling, which was succeeded by an effusion of tears. Never did they flow more freely, and never was she more affected. Gratitude was the predominant emotion, but there was a variety of sensations, and among them the most tender recollection of her father and mother. She thought of the joy it would have given them to see her prosperity; she wept with delight from the reflection,—and she wept, because it was only in imagination that she could sympathise with them.

But she could not be long without making Valmonsor a sharer in her joy. She returned to him with the letter and deed in her hand.

He met her, as she entered the room, saying, “The idea of separation becomes every moment more insupportable.”

“We shall not separate,” said Constantia, putting the letter and deed into his hand, “we meet now to part no more.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN the afternoon, Constantia proposed that they should set out for Delvin Lodge the next morning, but Valmonsor entreated their departure might be postponed.

“Let us,” said he, “pass one day more in this Elysian field. The imagination could not have contrived a more singular and enchanting scene for the termination of all our difficulties! —blessed as my prospects are, I shall leave this sweet spot with much regret.”

Constantia’s feelings were too much in unison to oppose his request; she consented without hesitation.

During her stay, she omitted not the attentions due to Mr. and Mrs. Delme. She inform-

ed them of the cause of her departure, warmly assuring them, that she should ever most gratefully remember the kindness they had shown her.

They parted from her with much reluctance, and not without soliciting a promise, cheerfully given, that she would revisit Silver-Moss.

After a journey of four days, Valmonsor and Constantia arrived in the evening at Delvin Lodge, where Mrs. Almerne, who had been apprised of their coming, by a letter Constantia had written upon the road, received them alone.

If ever benevolence was rewarded, it was at that moment.—Mrs. Almerne felt the happiness of doing good,—but she was content to feel it; she would not permit them to speak of it.

“Let me see that you are happy,” said she, “but speak not of gratitude.”

“I will then,” said Constantia, “express it only by my endeavours to show the impression,

which your virtues have made upon my heart.
—I will remember, that

“Virtue, the strength and beauty of the soul,
“Is the best gift of Heaven.”

Mrs. Almorne most affectionately embraced her, and rising said, “I received you alone, not more to indulge my own feelings, than to spare Lady Anson’s, who had not courage to meet with Miss Ornvile for the first time, in company. I shall now take Valmonsor to his friends here, and bring her to you.”

Matilda was almost overcome by timidity on approaching the woman, who had taken so powerful a hold of her imagination, but the engaging manner in which Constantia received her, soon dispelled her fears, and captivated her affection.

“Never,” said she to Sir Esmond, was “I so pleased with myself, as when receiving proofs of kindness from Miss Ornvile; when listening to the melodious tones of her voice, encouraging me by the sweetest ex-

pressions of approbation, I felt myself assured of that place in your esteem, of which I had so long been ambitious."

Sir Esmond saw with rapture the impression, which Matilda and Constantia made upon each other, and told them his happiness was now complete, in seeing the wife and sister of his heart united in friendship.

Constantia's meeting with Mr. Anson gave much pleasure to both ; he loved her,—she venerated him, and remembered with gratitude the generous concern he had lately shown for her.

At the first view of Mrs. Arnvale, Constantia saw an appearance formed to inspire love and respect. She had all the mild dignity and impressive countenance of Mrs. Almorne, and though smiles often illumined her face, the traces of care were deeply imprinted upon it.

An assemblage of friends in such fortunate circumstances, and so interesting to each other, could not fail to be happy, and the evening

passed with all the satisfaction that could be expected to result from such a meeting.

At parting, Mrs. Almorne desired Constantia to come to her very early in the morning, as she wished to have some conversation with her before the family met at breakfast.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONSTANTIA did not obey the injunction without much anxiety. She could not imagine that Mrs. Almorne would have desired to see her at a very early hour, unless she had important intelligence to communicate, which could not be delayed; and she was strengthened in this belief from her and Louisa's late extraordinary silence being still unaccounted for. The knowledge that it had no connection with Valmonsor, confirmed her fears for her brothers, and for Frederic particularly, she trembled.

"I wished to see you thus early, my dear," said Mrs. Almorne, as she entered her dressing-room, "that I might inform you of events, which have taken place in your absence. I would not interrupt the satisfaction of your

meeting with your friends last night, by obtruding new ideas upon you ; but it is now necessary that you should know immediately all that has happened since your departure. The time has been short, yet most interesting and unexpected events have occurred, and were indeed approaching, while I was unsuspecting of them."

"Frederic !" said Constantia, in a faint voice, while Mrs. Almorne paused.

"Yes, my dear," replied she ; " you have much to hear of your amiable and unfortunate brother, but you must be content to listen patiently to the recital I am going to give, without anticipating its conclusion by inquiry. You have others likewise to hear, but I shall begin with his affairs, as they are the most interesting.

When I was in town in November, Sir Esmond saw me in great concern for Lydia, and supposing it proceeded entirely from her illness, told me that much as he regarded her, he should hardly regret her death, as he feared her husband's affections were estranged from her.

I asked why he thought so? upon which he mentioned several circumstances, that had led him to discover Frederic's attachment to Miss Alderton.

I inquired if he had seen her? He said no, but that he knew her brother, and if she at all resembled him, he must regret Frederic's conduct on her account, as well as his wife's. Your brother, he said, had spent much time at Mrs Alderton's, and he blamed him for hazarding the peace of an innocent girl, by indulging a passion, which he knew must prove abortive.

On hearing this, I hesitated not to absolve Frederic, by giving Sir Esmond all the information I had received from Hanway; and this I ventured, not only to vindicate Frederic, but in the hope of Sir Esmond's serving him. You know the uncommon friendship which has always subsisted between them, and I thought it very possible he might be able to influence his conduct. Much as I esteemed your brother, I was not absolutely certain of the effect, which Lydia's affliction would have upon him,—still less did I foresee, that her speedy death was about to remove every obstacle to the accomplishment of Miss Alderton's designs.

Sir Esmond heard my account of Mrs.

Alderton with high indignation, but did not think it certain that her daughter was so designing and artful, as Hanway represented. He imagined she might be misled by affection for Frederic and the counsel of her mother, and he determined to become acquainted with her himself, that from his own observations he might form some opinion of her character.

I heard nothing from him, however, on the subject, till he came here, when he gave me a history, which I committed to paper for you. The time I was obliged to devote to the Anson family, made me longer in writing it than I expected, and the arrival of Valmonsor just as it was finished, prevented its being dispatched. I am glad, however, that it was written, as I could give you a more minute detail of circumstances, when they were fresh in my memory, than I might now. Here," continued Mrs. Almorne, putting some sheets of paper into the hands of Constantia, "you will find an account of Sir Esmond's transactions after my leaving town; the introductory part of my letter I do not trouble you with."

Constantia took the letter, and read as follows.

‘ Not long after Frederic’s departure for Altona, Sir Esmond requested Mrs. Hanway to give him an opportunity of seeing Miss Alderton, for though he thought the schemes of her mother were entirely defeated, he both felt some curiosity to see her, and hoped to serve Frederic by undeceiving him, if she really was the woman that Hanway imagined.

‘ Mrs. Hanway immediately complied with his request, and invited him to dine with Mrs. and Miss Alderton. The party was small, and contrived to favour his design of becoming acquainted with the latter, with whom he had a good deal of conversation. Before they parted, he talked of new plays and various celebrated publications, till he hit upon one she had not read, which he requested permission to send her. Permission was readily granted, and next morning, instead of sending, he waited upon her with it himself.

‘ He was most graciously received both by her and her mother, and, on taking leave, was politely invited to favour them with a visit any morning that he was passing.

‘ He availed himself of the invitation, and went repeatedly till his opinion of Miss Alderton was nearly decided. Before he saw her, fan-

cying that she must bear some resemblance to her brother, he imagined her a young, fair, pretty, bashful girl; gentle, but not clever. He found her a brunette of twenty-eight or nine; not handsome, but easy in her manners, agreeable and intelligent.

‘ Had he been a stranger to her situation with Frederic, he would have found nothing in her behaviour to condemn, but knowing it, he was greatly displeased with her. She had no appearance of depression or anxiety, and he could not think well of the woman, who could know herself the cause of the sad condition of Lydia, without being afflicted by it. Neither did he suppose she could appear thus tranquil on the loss of Frederic, if she had any affection for him.

‘ When Mrs. Ornvile died, curiosity to know if Mrs. or Miss Alderton suffered any remorse, carried him again to their house, but he was refused admittance, and Hanway told him that they either were, or pretended to be in deep distress.

‘ His anxiety to develop Miss Alderton’s character was now extreme, from the fear that she might some day regain her influence over Frederic. He called upon her repeatedly in

vain ; she was not so well as to see company. He gave up therefore, the pursuit, but desired Hanway to let him know if any thing occurred, which could excite fear of the renewal of their intercourse, and by him he was informed of their meeting in April.

‘ For an account of this meeting, I refer you to the inclosed letter from Mr Hanway, which I received in May, but wished to spare you the knowledge of.

‘ Mr Hanway was now as desirous as Sir Esmond to know if Miss Alderton felt any of the affection she had professed for Frederic. Since he saw there was danger of the recovery of her power, it would be a consolation to believe that she really regarded him ; but this he could not hope to ascertain himself, for aware of his knowledge of her conduct, she always appeared grave and dejected in his presence, even at the times he had reason to believe she seemed well to others. With Sir Esmond, he hoped her behaviour would be more undisguised, for though she probably knew of his relation to the Ornvile family, she was without suspicion of his knowledge of her connection with Frederic ; Mr. Hanway having assured her, before he knew the discovery had been made

to Sir Esmond, that it was the intention of Mrs. Almorne and himself, to conceal Frederic's misfortunes from his friends with the most vigilant care, as it was of the utmost importance to his credit, that they should be buried in oblivion.

‘ A few days after Frederic's meeting with Miss Alderton, Sir Esmond waited upon her, and found her so very agreeable, that he left her persuaded she had no heart to feel for any body but herself. Unwilling, however, to do her any injustice, and believing it possible that her apparent ease and cheerfulness might be merely an effort of politeness to him, he repeated his visit soon, determined to make it long.

‘ She received him with visible pleasure, conversed with more than her accustomed animation, and with an insinuating attention which he had never before seen her discover, though she always seemed disposed to attract. There was something likewise peculiar in the behaviour of her mother, which suggested the idea that they would not be sorry to find him a rival to Frederic.

‘ Various circumstances favoured the supposition. Miss Alderton's meeting with your brother had shown, that though her marriage

with him might happen, it was precarious, distant, and might never prove the agreeable event she had hoped. He might never so entirely cease to lament the fate of his wife, as to make her easy in the recollection, and he would certainly never see her mother with any satisfaction. His situation too, though desirable compared to any she had the least probability of attaining, was much inferior to Sir Esmond's, who with a great estate in possession, was free from every care that could disturb or restrain the enjoyment of life.

‘ Another visit confirmed his belief that these circumstances were well weighed by Mrs. and Miss Alderton, and that they ardently wished him to displace Frederic. He was no less desirous of doing so, and resolved to encourage their designs. It was not his intention to do any thing that could be at all improper either to Frederic or Miss Alderton; he meant only to give scope to her behaviour, and as she had already encouraged him in a manner, that he thought altogether unfeeling and dishonourable to Frederic, he considered himself perfectly at liberty to advance in attentions in proportion as she employed means to captivate; taking care, however, not to do any thing that could be in-

terpreted into a serious attention of making his addresses. He resolved that she should always be the first person in the drama, but that he should second her in such a manner, as might possibly prove the means of emancipating Frederic.

‘ Elated with this hope, he returned the following day to Mrs. Alderton’s, and was received with evident exultation by her and her daughter. They no doubt interpreted his visits as proceeding from the pleasure he found in their society, and left no means untried to please and to persuade him, that nothing could be more agreeable to them than his company.

‘ His happy situation and gay manner, prevented Miss Alderton from attempting the same mode of conquest with him, that she had pursued with Frederic, but she employed, with much address, a variety of fascinating arts.

‘ He made a long visit; talked to her of the gaieties and splendour of the Capital, and of a very elegant carriage he had ordered; to her mother, he spoke of his house in the country, of his neighbours, of the beauties of Kent, of rural fêtes, and of every thing, in fine, which could give them a favourable impression of his rich and happy state.

‘ They seemed delighted, and each succeeding visit appeared more and more eager to be in possession of the advantages he enjoyed. He was soon thoroughly convinced that Miss Alderton was as unworthy as her mother, and he was so extremely disgusted with both, as to feel the utmost impatience for the conclusion of the play.

‘ When he thought the moment for it arrived, he talked to them one morning, of Hampstead, and the adjacent country in a manner, that gave him an opportunity of proposing they should make an excursion thither, to which they slightly objected.

‘ The next day he brought them a very civil message from his uncle, inviting them to dine with him at Hampstead; he added that Mr. Anson’s carriage should attend them, and there should be a small agreeable party to meet them at his uncle’s any day they should fix for the excursion.

‘ When he had brought them to this point, he communicated his intentions to Mr. Hanway, whose assistance was necessary to the completion of his design. Mr. Hanway entered into his views, and readily undertook the part assigned him.

‘ It was now six months since the death of Mrs. Ornvile, and two since Frederic’s meeting with Miss Alderton. He had never once, during this interval, spoke of her to Mr. Hanway, or shown the slightest inclination to come upon the subject ; while Hanway, on his part, had been careful to avoid the mention of any circumstance that could recall her to his remembrance ; but now, taking an opportunity of speaking to him, when they were secure from interruption, he ventured to inquire if he had seen her, since the meeting he had informed him of ?’

‘ He answered, “ No.”’

“ My dear Ornvile,” said Hanway, “ you must be well convinced of the deep interest I take in your welfare, and cannot, I hope, imagine that I could rashly or unnecessarily intrude on you so delicate and painful a subject ; but I have urgent motives for wishing to know, if you have yet formed any plan of conduct with regard to her ?”

“ None,” replied Frederic, in much perturbation ; “ I think of her often, but never without being torn to pieces by contending emotions. I feel deep concern for the misery she suffers for me, and this concern keeps alive my affec-

tion for her, but I cannot think of her mother without such horrible recollections, as would make me fly to the extremity of the earth to avoid her.—When this may cease, Heaven knows! but till it does, I can form no resolution respecting her daughter.”

“ This is a most melancholy state,” rejoined Hanway, “ and excites my sincerest commiseration. I fear it can only be alleviated by your either becoming indifferent about Miss Alderton, or returning to her society. Were you accustomed to see her daily, the thoughts of her might cease to be painful; and if she is really amiable, you might find consolation in her affection, and in removing the unhappiness which she must suffer, if she is in the least deserving your regard.”

‘ Frederic made no answer, and Mr. Hanway paused a while, before he thus resumed the conversation :’

“ If she is not very amiable, Orville, I should wish you never to see her again, for it is impossible that you could have comfort in her society.—Will you pardon my asking, if you are perfectly certain of her affection ?”

‘ Frederic appeared surprised and disturbed by the question, but replied that if appearances

were at all to be trusted, he could have no doubt of it.'

"Are these appearances," rejoined Hanway, "of a kind which do not admit of doubt?"

"The agitation of your brother, showed how very painful the conversation was to him, but after a short silence, he asked what appearances did not admit of doubt?"

"So few," replied Hanway, "that I should not forgive myself for infusing suspicions into your mind, were I not certain that it is at this moment in your power to ascertain her regard for you."

"How?"

"By a means, which you will at first revolt at; but if you will follow my advice, it will settle some doubts, that I most anxiously wish removed, before there is the least risk of your marrying her."

"There is no danger of that at present; but what has led you to distrust her?"

"I am not immediately at liberty to explain myself fully, but may I not hope, that you have some confidence in me?"

"You perplex and distress me, but tell me how I can resolve your doubts?"

"By asking her to marry you now privately,

and keep the marriage concealed till it may be proper to disclose it."

"Impossible! impossible!" cried Frederic, rising, and walking in a disordered manner about the room; "it is the last thing I should think of."

"I knew the proposal would shock you," said Hanway, "but listen to the motives that urge it. They may appear on reflection, convincing; singular distresses do not admit of ordinary remedies.—You esteem Miss Alderton; you believe in her affection for you, and lament the unhappiness it has occasioned her.—You acknowledged to herself, not long ago, your regard for her,—said that it was your earnest wish to promote her comfort, and if ever your mind was restored to any degree of tranquillity, that you would offer her your hand.—What must be the consequence of all this? may it not lead her to cherish her affection, and pass years, perhaps, in misery, waiting the fulfilment of your promises, which, if you really esteem her, you are bound by every feeling of honour and humanity to perform.—If you do not implicate her in the misconduct of her mother,—if you think her innocent, amiable, affectionate, and unfortunate, can you too soon restore her to

peace?—If on the contrary, you suspect her of indifference or insincerity, ought you not instantly to know it, that you may as quickly as possible, banish her from your mind?”

‘ Mr. Hanway paused, but Frederic answered not, though he had listened as calmly as could be expected.’

“ I am sensible,” resumed Hanway, “ that the idea of marrying immediately, must not only be very painful, but appear improper ; and nothing could have induced me to propose it, but believing it the only means you may ever have of discovering her real character. I have reason to think that she is at this moment in expectation of being addressed by an agreeable young man of fortune, to whom I am well assured, she has paid the most flattering attentions ; but if she should accept of your hand, notwithstanding her hopes of him, you may then indeed, place confidence in her regard.”

‘ On the mention of a rival, Frederic changed colour, and appeared so much disturbed, that Hanway found it most painful to proceed with the task he had undertaken.

‘ When he ceased speaking, Frederic hastily replied, that the proper way to judge of her, was to leave her conduct unbiafsed, for her

refusing the offer she expected, would be a more convincing proof of her character, than her acceptance of him, while uncertain of the other.'

"It would," returned Hanway, "if the offer she expects could be made, but I know it never will, and a very short time will undeceive her. I repeat, therefore, that you have now in your power a most fortunate opportunity of trying her affection, which in a week will be lost for ever."

'Frederic seemed struck, and, after a moment's hesitation, asked what motive he could urge for proposing a private marriage?'

"The true one; tell her that you wish it for her sake, as it must relieve her from anxiety, if she has the regard for you which she has led you to believe; and you wish it for your own, as it will be a consolation to have such a proof of her affection and esteem."

"It is too much to ask."

"Far from it; if she loves you, she will rejoice in the request, and will not hesitate an instant to comply with it;—if she refuses, after the sacrifices she has required of you, and the misery you have suffered, you cannot have a doubt that she is undeserving your regard."

"Think not," resumed Hanway, after a short silence, "that I could hazard your being prematurely involved in a marriage with Miss Alderton, without a thorough conviction of the propriety of the trial I propose; you will not suspect me of being particularly interested for her happiness, and cannot, I trust, have a doubt of the interest I take in yours."

"Say no more, my friend," cried Frederic, "you have prevailed; I will make the trial you desire, whatever it may cost me."

"That you may suffer from it as little as possible," replied Hanway, "I wish you to write, not speak to her on the subject."

"It must be so; to a letter I may be equal,—a meeting I dare not think of."

Before Hanway had brought Frederic to yield to his solicitations, he imagined that nothing more was necessary to secure his deliverance from Miss Alderton; but no sooner had he obtained his compliance, than he began to fear he had only precipitated him irrecoverably into her power. If your brother, he thought, had been left to act as he wished, he would have been so long of returning to her, that numberless events might have occurred to

separate them for ever, but now, she would infallibly seize the opportunity to secure him.

‘ There was no doubt her attentions to Sir Esmond, had proceeded from interest alone, but to Frederic, she might have personal attachment ; and some feeling of compassion or regard to honour, might also operate in his favour, which, joined to the uncertainty of Sir Esmond’s intention, would hardly allow her to hesitate a moment to comply with his request.

‘ Sir Esmond, to whom Mr. Hanway immediately communicated his success and his fears, endeavoured to banish the latter as groundless. It was highly probable, he said, from Frederic’s handsome person and engaging manners, that she liked him, but he was persuaded she would not allow affection for any human being, to weigh in the balance with riches ; especially in favour of a man, with respect to whom, both she and her mother would lie under so many disadvantages. This circumstance alone, he was convinced, would have made it easy for a man much his inferior, to have supplanted Frederic ; but he did not suppose she would acknowledge any intention of relinquishing him ; she would merely propose to postpone their marriage, till he saw the event of her expectations with regard to himself. These expectations, he said,

however high they might rise, had been managed in such a manner, that she could neither depend upon them, nor form an idea of the time in which they might be terminated ; but as he was too valuable a prize to be lightly thrown away, particularly at a moment, when the introduction to his uncle must so agreeably flatter her hopes, she would certainly decline Frederic's offer, and make it easy for him to attain the full accomplishment of his scheme.

‘ This reasoning did not entirely satisfy Mr. Hanway, whose anxiety made him timid, but there was no resource ; he must now submit to let Frederic's fate be determined by the trial he had proposed.

‘ The following day Frederic brought him a letter to Miss Alderton, saying, as he put it into his hand, “ I know not whether this is right or wrong,—it is the dictate of feeling.”

‘ Hanway read it with high approbation. It was not long, but sufficiently comprehensive, and extremely pathetic. He alluded slightly, but properly, to the death of his wife, as an event which still kept him, and would ever keep him a prey to regret ; but expressed the strongest anxiety for Miss Alderton's happiness, and, in a most delicate and tender manner, urged a

private marriage, as a measure which might contribute to the restoration of her peace, and would do much in promoting his own. He apologized for writing on the subject, from inability to speak of it as he wished, without having previously some hope of success, but if she would give him encouragement, he would wait upon her immediately.

‘The whole letter comprised every thing that Hanway could desire, expressed in a most affecting manner.’

“This,” said Hanway, as soon as he had perused it, “is decisive; if she refuses your request, she has no feeling.”

“I should almost think so,” replied Frederic.

‘It was immediately dispatched by her brother, and a short time was now to decide, whether Sir Esmond’s expectations, or Hanway’s fears were just.’

‘She did not allow them to remain long in doubt; the next morning she sent an answer.’

‘It began with grateful acknowledgments for his generous concern for her happiness, which made her more than ever, if possible, solicitous for his. In the strongest terms she expressed her anxiety for his welfare, declaring that this very anxiety would not permit her to comply

with his request, as she could not think him in a state to determine what prospect of comfort he could have in a union with her. That she had been, though innocently, the cause of much wretchedness to him, and ought to be well assured their marriage was likely to promote his peace before she allowed it to take place; especially as the most amiable consideration for her, more than a just regard to himself, had influenced his proposal. In a few months he might be a better judge what he had to expect from time, and till then she wished to delay their meeting.

‘ Her letter was admirably written, and framed in such a manner, as might permit her in a short time, either to accord gracefully to his request, or reject it for ever, on the pretence of its being impossible that he could ever see her or her mother with tranquillity.

‘ Frederic would not have been hurt with it, if her refusal had been less decisive; as it was, he was disposed to view it favourably.’

“ I know not,” said he, after a few minutes consideration, “ if there is any thing in this letter to condemn;—she probably acts from judgment in opposition to feeling; her views

are rational and just,—perhaps I should say disinterested and generous.”

“There is certainly nothing in this letter decisive against her,” replied Hanway, “but after writing it, were you to see her gay and happy, what would you think?”

“Think!—that she had no heart.”

“Yet thus, it is in my power to show her, if you choose.”

“It cannot be;—she cannot be so worthless; why should you entertain such injurious suspicions?”

“I will tell you,” said Hanway, “though in doing so, I hazard the loss of your friendship both to another and myself, but we value your peace yet more, and if you will listen patiently, I shall faithfully relate the circumstances, which have led me to think of her as I do.”

“Frederic promised attention, and Hanway gave him an account of the proceedings of his friends with regard to Miss Alderton from the commencement of his acquaintance with her, beginning with his own suspicions, which led to inquiries of her brother, and had ultimately been the means of exciting the curiosity and anxiety of Sir Esmond.

“He concluded by saying, that Sir Esmond

had not only been actuated by motives of the purest regard to him, but had been particularly careful, through the whole of his intercourse with Miss Alderton, to do nothing which her own conduct to himself had not fully warranted.

‘When he ceased speaking, Frederic quitted the room abruptly, without saying a word.

‘Hanway did not think it right to follow, and did not see him again till early the next morning, when he came into his room to solicit forgiveness for the manner in which he had left him.’

“At the moment I quitted you, my valued friend,” said Frederic, “I was fully sensible of your kindness, but could not behave as I wished.”

“You behaved,” replied Hanway, “with all the lenity and candour I could possibly expect, and it was with infinite pain I put you to so great a trial. I made a deep incision to recover you from a dangerous wound,—the operation was severe, but I trust the event will be fortunate.”

“The cure must be tedious,” said Frederic, “not from what I shall suffer for the loss of Miss Alderton, but from the shock of being deceived. Had she died, I could not for my own sake have lamented her, for the painful

ideas, which must always be associated with her, would for ever have empoisoned any satisfaction I could have found in her society."

"Yet, had you lost her in a way, which did not injure her in your esteem, your grief might have been deep and lasting. You will now be relieved from concern about her, and will think with joy of the escape you have made."

"Yes, if I could think only of myself, in remembering her, but to the pain, which must ever be felt from being deceived in a person we regard, is added the horrible consequences of that deception."

"Many of the misfortunes which befall us in this miserable world," replied Hanway, "there is an absolute necessity for forcing ourselves to bury in oblivion; life would otherwise be insupportable, and you, my friend, may banish the remembrance of yours with more propriety than most men, as they have been chiefly owing to the wickedness of others.—Your trouble, however, with Miss Alderton is not at an end; you must have ocular demonstration of her character before you renounce her. Sir Esmond has contrived a plan for your seeing her with him without being seen, to which, we hope, you will not object."

“ It is wholly unnecessary, and would be most painful ; I can have no doubt of what you tell me.”

“ If there is a man in the world you ought to trust, it is certainly Sir Esmond ; yet others have been treacherous, who could be as little suspected. Were it even impossible he could deceive, it is not impossible he may be mistaken ; on such occasions therefore, ocular demonstration should always be had, when it can be obtained. Besides, your seeing the impropriety of Miss Alderton’s behaviour will afford you a good apology for leaving her.”

“ That is a strong inducement ;—what is your plan ?”

“ Sir Esmond has engaged her mother and her to make an excursion to Hampstead, where they are to dine with his uncle. There he intends to take a walk with her in the evening in the garden, where he wishes you to be disguised as a gardener ; in this way he thinks you may see her behaviour, and hear their conversation, without risk of discovery.”

“ The plan seems strange, yet practicable ;—lose no time in putting it in execution,—the sooner the torture is over the better.”

‘ Hanway went immediately to inform Sir

Esmond, who managed matters with such expedition, that the next day Mrs. and Miss Alderton dined at Hampstead, with Mr. Anson, Mrs. Arnvale, and two or three other persons. Mrs. Arnvale and Matilda had long been informed by Sir Esmond of Frederic's story, and of the plan for his deliverance.

‘ In the evening, Sir Esmond requested Miss Alderton to take a walk; she consented with pleasure, and he conducted her to the garden.

‘ Frederic was there in the habit of a gardener, with a flapped hat, a patch on one eye, a handkerchief round his head and a spade in his hand.

‘ Sir Esmond walked near him for some minutes, with Miss Alderton leaning on his arm, and then came close to the place where he was at work, on pretext of looking at some flowers.

‘ Her appearance was full of gaiety. She wore a very showy dress, and looked uncommonly well. There was a more than ordinary glow in her cheek,—her eyes sparkled with pleasure; she lavished smiles on Sir Esmond, and talked to him with the utmost animation, imagining, probably, that she was on the eve of becoming Lady Anson.

‘ Frederic was the first to leave the garden; he quitted it about ten minutes after they entered, having in that short time seen enough of Miss Alderton, to desire never to see her more.

‘ On arriving in town, he wrote to her, that though he could easily excuse her rejecting his proposal, he could not help thinking the gaiety of her behaviour at Hampstead, which he had seen, so incompatible with any regard for him, or feeling for his situation, that she could not be surprised at his determining never to obtrude himself upon her notice again.

‘ This letter he sent by her brother, the day after her return from Hampstead, and the following morning she had the mortification to receive a farewell visit from Sir Esmond, upon his leaving town for Kent.

‘ This was the business which detained him from us in April, though he did not give me a hint of his design, lest it should not be attended with success.

‘ Before he left town, he visited Frederic, who received him with the utmost kindness, and seemed truly sensible of the friendship he had shown him.

‘ After they had conversed a short time, Frederic pointed to his sons, who were playing on the carpet, and said, “ How much are these boys obliged to you, for preserving them from Miss Alderton !—but you must be a father, and a fond father, before you can know how much I feel the obligation.”

‘ Sir Esmond tried to divert the train of his thoughts, by speaking to the boys, but their prattle seemed to increase his disturbance.’

“ Every smile,” said he, “ every look of kindness which they give me, are daggers to my heart.—I am miserable when I see them,—I am more miserable when they are absent, lest they should be neglected or ill-used : they have no mother now to watch over them !——How bitter are my reproaches for the step-mother I would have given them !”

“ You have no cause for reproach,” said Sir Esmond, “ since you were deceived in her character.”

“ But how was I deceived ?—By my own rashness. Had I not disregarded, or rather repelled the information Hanway wished to give me at an early period of my acquaintance with her, I should never have been misled.”

"We may often," said Sir Esmond, "be as much misled by others, as by trusting to our own discernment."

"I should at least," returned Frederic, "have heard what he had to say ; the authority of such a man as Hanway ought to have put me upon my guard.—Neither the opinion of the friends, nor the foes of individuals, should be implicitly trusted ; both may be erroneous, but they ought not to be presumptuously despised ; and there are many other ways of attaining knowledge of characters, if we would be at the trouble. Let us seek it in their private conduct ; their pecuniary transactions ; their behaviour to the persons they live with ;—to tradespeople, servants, and dependents, and we shall at least approach the truth. I have been miserably deceived in characters, because I never searched deeper than the surface."

"We should lose all comfort in life," said Sir Esmond, "were we to be always distrustful of appearances."

"It is not a habit of suspicion I wish to indulge, but merely to guard against blind confidence. On important occasions, at least, we should be cautious, but we are never disposed

to think our judgment can be misled, and are even apt to be offended at the slightest suggestion to the injury of a person in whose favour we are prepossessed, although we have no motive for regard, but their having pleased us.

—With respect to women, particularly, we always yield to the illusion of the senses, and forgive every thing in those, who flatter our passions.

Miss Alderton's attachment to me, secured my favour;—as we were situated, it should have been her condemnation.—Notwithstanding the unfortunate habits of Sally Cusliffe, Hastings has never once entertained the least doubt of her affection or fidelity.—Philip has shut his eyes with equal facility. However regardless he may be of fashionable vices, there are some particulars in the conduct of Mrs. Melfont, which he would have reprobated in any other woman!"

' Sir Esmond endeavoured to prevail upon him to accompany him to Delvin Lodge. He said he was not fit for the sight of felicity, but when he was better, he would be the first person to whom he would come.—"What," added he, "would I not now give, for that

sincere and tender affection, which, in possession, I knew so little how to value !”

“ Had not your countenance, my dear Madam,” said Constantia, as soon as she had perused the narrative, “ assured me that I had nothing to fear, I should not have been able to read your letter, without knowing the conclusion. Can I ever be enough thankful for the escape which Frederic has had !”

“ When ~~Str~~ Esmond gave me this account,” said Mrs. Almyne, “ he added, that he understood from Hanway, that Frederic was in the deepest wretchedness, and they both feared it would be long,—very, very long, before he would recover any tranquillity. I too was in complete despair about him, when a very unexpected, and most important event occurred, which inspired me with better hopes. A change has taken place in his situation, which, by forcing him into the society of his friends, and giving him agreeable occupations, will probably have beneficial effects.”

“ What change can have such consequences ?”

“ After what I have said, can it be necessary to add, that your eldest brother is no more ?”

“ Dead !”

“ He is.—We received the intelligence a few hours after Valmensor set out for Cumberland. You know that he had long been in a very indifferent state of health, and had a complication of disorders, the effect of a very dissipated life. Good health, or long life, was not therefore to be expected for him, but he died suddenly, after having been only a few weeks slightly indisposed.

At the first mention of her brother's death, Constantia changed colour, and as Mrs. Almorne proceeded to speak of him, she melted into tears.

“ I am pleased with your sensibility, my dear,” said Mrs. Almorne, “ though I did not expect that you would feel thus for Hastings.”

“It is not for him, my dear Madam, that I feel; I regret him neither as a brother, nor as a man, but I cannot hear without concern of an event, which would so deeply have affected my dear mother.—I think what she would have felt,—I see her revered countenance full of sorrow,—her venerable form mowed down with grief, and I grieve in imagination with her.”

“I respect, my dear, your feelings.”

“Was Frederic with him?”

“He was, and every attention you could wish was paid to him. He died unmarried, and without having made any provision for Sally, his illness not having alarmed him, though it detained him in town; but Frederic considering her attention to him, and the severe disappointment she suffered, immediately made a settlement upon her, which gives her independence, and may induce her to live virtuously.

Frederic is now at Ornaville, where he came to attend his brother's funeral. He knows that I expected you last night, but wished to delay

seeing you, till you were informed of the events that have occurred in your absence."

"I am bewildered with the change, which so short a time has produced."

"Your trial of solitude has been short, but you will remember with pleasure, that you had fortitude to make it.—You return to society richer than you suppose, for Frederic is now employed in giving effect to your father's Will, as declared by Edgeworth and me."

"How generous! but is it right to let him do so."

"Lady Horndon scrupled his doing it with respect to herself, but he told her that she must not think he did her a favour. He had repeatedly said to us in February, that Hastings ought to do so, and could he now therefore act otherwise? but he assured her that no action of his life could ever give him more pleasure."

"Whoever knows him will believe it."

"He wished also to repay me the money he

got for Evelyn, but I would not permit it. I told him that I had always designed him a legacy, and notwithstanding his acquisition of fortune, I saw that he would have ample occasion for wealth.

I am happy to tell you, that there is no doubt of the legitimacy of his sons. His marriage was not according to strict rule, and might have exposed Mr. Rook to inconvenience, which made him therefore desirous that the ceremony should be again performed; but Frederic was mistaken in supposing that his marriage could be annulled, and neither Mr. Hanway nor I were last autumn sufficiently informed to correct his mistake.

I have still, my dear, other interesting subjects to speak of, but I must not at present detain you longer from your friends."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AFTER breakfast, Mrs. Almorne took an opportunity of speaking to Valmonsor apart from the company. She informed him of the addition which had been made to his fortune by the death of Sir Hastings, and hoped it would enable him to adopt a plan of life, which might be in every respect agreeable.

He replied, that Miss Ornvill's fortune was previously far more than was necessary to his happiness, and fortunately their sentiments coincided respecting their future plan of life. It was hardly requisite to add, that he meant to quit the sword for the plough.

Mrs. Almorne said she rejoiced to hear it, and asked if they had fixed on a place of residence.

They wished it, he said, to be chosen by her.

"Wherever you settle," replied Mrs. Almorne, "my habitation will be near, but you may have local attachments, or connections which ought to influence you."

"It would be very important connections, indeed," returned Valmonsor, "that could induce me to separate Miss Ornvillle from a circle of friends, to whom she is so much, and justly attached ; but there is really no place I prefer to Kent, which has been the scene of all my happiness. I have no near relations, and my friends,—a soldier's friends ! are scattered all over the world."

"For Miss Ornvillle's sake," said Mrs. Almorne, "I am happy you can reside here with satisfaction, and there is now a place in the neighbourhood to be sold, which I believe will suit you : Oak Hill."

"I cannot imagine," replied Valmonsor, "a more desirable residence."

"The house is handsome and convenient,"

said Mrs. Almorne; "the situation beautiful, and the grounds in a state to exercise at once your skill in agriculture, and your talents as a man of taste."

"If Miss Ornvile approves," replied Valmonsor, "I shall be happy in the possession of it."

The proposal was received with the utmost satisfaction by Constantia, who declared that no abode could be more agreeable to her, and it was therefore settled, that the purchase should immediately be made.

Valmonsor then proposed that he should set out the next morning to dispose of his commission, which he hoped would speedily be accomplished, as the senior captain of his regiment would be glad to purchase it.

Mrs. Almorne wished him not to lose a day in the disposal of it, and said that during his absence, measures should be taken for obtaining possession of Oak Hill, and preparing it for reception.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AFTER the departure of Valmonsor in the morning, Mrs. Almorne withdrew with Constantia to her apartment

“On concluding our conversation yesterday, my dear,” said she, “I told you that I had still several interesting subjects to speak of; and first, let me ask, if you do not think me cruel for having so long concealed the fortune I designed you. I could not have had resolution for it, had I known the fate of Lady Anson’s legacy, when I informed you of the loss of the Will; but afterwards, my conviction of the advantages to be derived from concealment, made me persist in it, notwithstanding the pain it cost me. It gave you an opportunity of knowing your friends, as well as yourself, and might, I thought, be attended with beneficial effects

through the whole of your life.—Your journey to Silver-Moss, would speak a language too impressive ever to be forgotten.”

“ It did ; and I am infinitely obliged to you for concealing your kind intentions. Independent of the many lessons, which the feeling of adversity alone can give, the single circumstance of its having put it in my power to try the affection of Valmonsor, would be sufficient to make me happy in it.—I have often rejoiced that I was not an heiress ; it would have poisoned my comfort for life, could I have suspected that the man I married, was influenced in his choice of me, by the hope of fortune.”

“ I am happy that the conduct I pursued, though so painful to us both for awhile, has ultimately been the most fortunate for you. I own the delight, which I felt from your behaviour on the loss of the Will, very soon softened the distress that your sufferings occasioned, and confirmed my wavering resolution to keep you ignorant of your situation, till we could form a decided opinion of Valmonsor, which a very short time, I hoped, would enable us to do.”

"How considerate you have ever been of my happiness in every particular!"

"Had you married Woodford, Constantia, a few relics would have been all the legacy, you would have got from me. Over-grown fortunes are pernicious to the possessors, and injurious to society. Before you met with Valmonsor, I had bequeathed you my fortune conditionally. If you continued single, you were to enjoy the whole for life, and dispose of it at your death as you pleased, which, with seventeen thousand pounds of your own always at command, would, I hoped, secure your comfort and independence. If you married a rich man, you were to forfeit the whole or a part, precisely in proportion to the extent of his wealth. When I knew of your attachment to Valmonsor, persuaded that you would then either become his wife, or continue single, I executed the deed I sent you, and likewise bequeathed you all my other effects, which should be undisposed of at the time of my decease."

"The favours you bestow, my dear Madam, are always as beneficial to the interest, as grateful to the heart of the person obliged; but to

me how you have been able to do so much, since even before I knew of your gift to myself, the magnitude of your bounties always surprised me?"

"When Mr. Almorne married, he had a landed property of three thousand pounds per annum, with a considerable sum of money placed at interest. The expense of living was then so moderate, that we found two thousand pounds a-year, sufficient for all our expenses, and thus he acquired large personal property, the whole of which he left to me. During my residence in Wales, my expenses were so trifling, that it rapidly increased, and on settling here, I found myself the proprietor of forty thousand pounds, besides an annual income of three thousand. This fully accounts for my riches, which I was most careful to conceal, that I might be, as little as possible, the object of mercenary attentions.

It will be a satisfaction to you, to know that our father was acquainted with the destination of my property. When I ventured to encourage your attachment to Valmonsor, without consulting your parents, it was because I intended to obviate the only objection they could have

to him ; but I was mistaken in supposing your father required fortune with such a character. He told me he would prefer Valmonsor to the richest man whose qualities were inferior, and expected from your mutual worth and affection, that you would be much happier with him on a small income, than you could ever be with another. When I informed him of the fortune I designed you, he at first scrupled your receiving it, but was soon convinced that I could not employ it so well. It was with inexpressible pleasure that I saw the delight he took in viewing your prospects completely what he wished, and he died in the full persuasion, that his wishes for you, would soon be accomplished."

"What a consolation is this to me!—How great would have been my happiness, had my father and mother been alive to have partaken of it!"

Constantia was so much affected by the recollection, that it was some time before Mrs. Almorne could attempt to interrupt the indulgence of her grief.

"Your father and mother, my sweet Con-

stantia," said she, at length, " will ever dwell in your memory beloved and revered ; but when you think of them, reflect, that they died, after a fortunate life, when they could no longer be happy."

" Time," replied Constantia, " may soften my regret, but they were a part of my existence, the loss of which, I feel at the turning of every step."

" Let me now, my dear, call your attention to your friend Louisa, whose situation I intended should be the principal subject of our conversation. I told you she was well, and that you would see her to-day ; but before you meet, it is necessary that you should know what has happened to her in your absence."

" Nothing, I hope, to interrupt her peace?"

" You will hear.—You will now have an explanation of her silence. It was painful to her to write ; and not suspecting there was any thing to retard my doing it, she did not tell me of the interruption of your correspondence, till after the arrival of Valmonsor ; otherwise, I

should have written, had it been only a line, to prevent your being alarmed."

"What strange distress could make it painful for Louisa to write to me!"

"Fortune has not been idle with the Hargrave family since your departure;—Harriet is married."

"I am terrified to ask to whom?"

"You know Lord Valmore?"

"One of the most amiable men."

"Not more amiable than agreeable, and heir apparent to one of the most respectable families and finest fortunes in the kingdom."

"Gracious heaven! Is he the husband of Harriet Hargrave!"

"The last time you heard of her, she was at Lady Elrington's near Bath, where she met with Lord Valmore. He had admired her much when you saw him in Kent two years

ago, and on residing with her, the spark, she had before lighted, soon kindled into a flame. Too honourable to engage her affections, without being certain of offering her his hand, and too much attached to his father to do so without consulting him, he left Lady Elrington's abruptly, without giving a hint of his intentions, and went to Valmore Park to ask his father's permission to make his addresses to her.

On arriving there, he easily obtained the wished-for permission, but could not immediately return to Harriet, as his mother was ill of a fever, of which she died. Her death threw his family into great distress, and brought on his father a relapse of a lingering disorder, from which he had but lately recovered. Lord Valmore finding it would be impossible to leave his father for some time, and too much afraid of rivals, to wait patiently the delay, wrote to Lady Elrington to explain his situation; and requested that she would make Harriet acquainted with his affection for her, and in his name, make her an offer of his hand.

The first mention of Valmore's proposal, Harriet received with evident satisfaction, and avowed approbation; but on finding their marriage must be delayed at least two or three

months from the state of his family, she appeared to hesitate, and soon declared herself averse to enter into any engagement.

Lady Elrington was surprised at her wavering behaviour, but imputed it to the gaiety of her temper making her unwilling to go into the retirement, which delicacy to Valmore would render proper in his absence, were she engaged to him. This idea was naturally suggested by Harriet's being then at Bath, where she had been several weeks, surrounded by admirers.

Lady Elrington therefore wrote to Lord Valmore, that though Miss Hargrave declined entering into any engagement at present, she had no doubt that she would receive his addresses favourably, when he could make them in person. She was confirmed in this opinion from there being no man in Bath at the time, who was in any respect comparable to him; but a week after, Harriet, to the astonishment of all her acquaintance, married Sir Warren Dashgrove."

"Astonishing indeed! the man whom she even thought it lost time to converse with a minute!"

"True."

“ It is even unaccountable that he should have thought of her. When I saw him, he seemed too much engrossed by his bottle and the sports of the field, to have any relish for the society of women ; especially such women as Harriet.”

“ He was induced to marry by the solicitations of an uncle, who was anxious to see an heir to the family-title and estate. Mr Dashgrove is a rich old bachelor, who does not think he can dispose of his wealth so properly, as by rendering it the means of preserving the ancient family of Dashgrove. He is a worthy man, but this family vanity has led him to aggrandize his nephew in preference to sisters he has, who have large families with small fortunes. He had frequently in vain, requested Sir Warren to marry, until he offered to settle the greatest part of his fortune upon him, if he would marry immediately to his satisfaction. The bait was too great to be resisted ; Sir Warren no longer hesitated, but went directly to Bath in search of a wife. He made no secret of his errand, which was soon known to many there ; among others to Harriet, who paid

him a great deal of attention, and, about a fortnight after his arrival, they were married."

" Her conduct is the most inexplicable I ever heard of."

" I believe that only one explanation can be given. The particulars I have related, were told me by Lady Elrington, who is here on a visit to Lady Manor. She informed both Louisa and me, of Harriet's rejection of Valmore as an event which she greatly lamented, and I suspect, that curiosity to know if we could explain her extraordinary conduct, was the principal cause of her intrusting us with the transaction. It was only to me, however, that she mentioned the way in which Sir Warren had been induced to marry.

Louisa and I were lost in amazement at the whole of Harriet's behaviour, till upon conversing farther with Lady Elrington, we found that Captain Elford had been at Bath with Harriet, and had lodged in the same house."

— " What a horrible suspicion you insinuate!"

" Truly horrible, but just.—Various circum-

stances, which it is unnecessary to detail, leave no doubt of the fact.—On the first intelligence of Harriet's marriage, Louisa was distressed by it, but on this discovery, she sunk into the most unhappy state imaginable. She severely reproached herself for having endeavoured to conceal Harriet's guilt, and said, that if it had not been for Prudence and her, it might not have been in her power to deceive any man.

I tried to alleviate her concern by representing Sir Warren as a man, who could not be affected by any misfortune that did not deprive him of his bottle or his dogs. She acknowledged that this softened her regret for him, but did not lessen her fault, as Valmore might have been the husband of Harriet. This single circumstance, she said, was sufficient to show how blamable her conduct had been, which was the more inexcusable as it had not proceeded from affection to her sister. Though nothing could justify her behaviour, it might have been some palliation of her error, if it had arisen from feelings of tenderness for so near a relation; but both Prudence and she had been governed entirely by self interest.

I reminded her that it was the interest of Mrs. Elford which had chiefly influenced her con-

duct, whose situation, and that of her whole family, would have been deeply affected by the discovery of Harriet's infamy.

She replied, that the discovery could not have been so fatal to Mrs. Elford, as such a wife to Valmore ; that besides, the opinion of Mrs. Elford had been too much biased by concern for the interest of her sisters, which ought never to have been regarded. Neither was it only the concealment of Harriet's conduct with respect to Elford, for which she felt remorse, but a series of concealments, which had been most sedulously managed, and were altogether improper, since for two years, Harriet had been unworthy to be the wife of any good man.

With great difficulty, I succeeded at last in some degree, in calming her mind, when an incident occurred, which renewed all her distresses.

Before Sir Warren offered himself to Harriet, he wrote to his uncle to know if he would approve of her for a niece ? Mr. Dashgrove in reply, expressed the warmest approbation of his choice. Many circumstances contributed to this. He had received a very favourable account of herself ; was extremely pleased with her connections, and highly gratified by her

being of a noble family. He therefore considered his nephew as most fortunate in a wife, and flattered himself that she would be the counterpart of Louisa, whom he had seen, and was greatly pleased with. He had been the intimate friend of Tresilian's father, and interested himself so much for his family, as to regard them next to his own. He came from town in January to visit Louisa at her sister-in-law's, where the impression she made upon him, and the high encomiums he heard of her from Tresilian's friends, convinced him, on hearing of his nephew's intended marriage, that her sister must be every thing he could wish.

Louisa knew nothing of the particular interest which Mr. Dashgrove took in the marriage of Sir Warren, till he came lately to Tresilian Vale, on his way to Dashgrove Hall, where he was going to make his first visit to Harriet. Thirty miles he came out of his road to offer his congratulations to Louisa on the joyful occasion, and express his high satisfaction in his nephew's marriage.

Louisa received the good old man with all the respect and kindness due to him, and acquitted herself with tolerable firmness, while he only talked of the anxiety he had felt to see his

nephew married, and of the pleasure which his choice had given him ;—but when he proceeded to enter into a discussion on the great antiquity and respectability of the Dashgrove family, and to express his hope that Harriet would soon give her husband an heir, who would preserve unimpaired the honour of his ancestors ;—her strength failed,—the colour forsook her face, and she was so much overcome, that Tresilian was obliged to carry her out of the room.

Fortunately Mr. Dashgrove did not appear to have the least suspicion, that her disorder was owing to distress of mind, and he left the house without seeing her again, thinking it proper to shorten his visit on account of her illness.

On his departure, Tresilian endeavoured to console her with the hope that Harriet's first child would be a daughter ; but she derived little satisfaction from the suggestion, as she said that all Harriet's children might be Elford's. —If a woman, she said, who is past twenty, acts dishonourably upon one occasion, how is she to be trusted on another ?—Where principle is not the safeguard of honour, no man can be a moment secure.

Nothing, she thought, could allay her unhappiness, or accord with her sense of what was right, but acknowledging to Sir Warren the conduct of his wife;—yet, when she reflected on the numerous evils that might ensue; the misery of old Dashgrove, who had but a few years to live,—the long life of shame and suffering which would be the consequence to Miss Hargrave,—the variety of afflictions it might bring on Mrs. Elford, and the odium it would draw upon herself for ruining her sister,—an odium, which she could be regardless of for her own sake, but not for her husband's; she suffered a conflict of feeling which occasioned the cruellest distress.

Tresilian came to me in the utmost anxiety, to try if I could console or advise her, and my efforts were not ineffectual. I persuaded her to suspend for a time, the consideration of the subject, as it was impossible she could, in the present agitated state of her mind, form a fair judgment of it; while the dwelling upon it perpetually would injure herself, and destroy the peace of her husband.—To this last argument, she yielded immediately, for he is most deservedly the object of her tenderest care.

I prevailed upon her likewise, to become my

guest for a while, that she might be removed from her visitors, who think they cannot oblige her more than by talking of Lady Dashgrove; a subject, which in company is the more painful, as it renders almost indispensable a disguise, that is at once at war with her feelings and principles.—Severe, Constantia, are the afflictions which we must not acknowledge !”

“ How peculiar are Louisa’s !”

“ Your return and prosperity have given her the utmost satisfaction, and she comes here to-day to remain, where I hope she will recover.”

“ I trust that we shall be able to restore her peace; she certainly has no cause for self-reproach.—Where is Miss Hargrave ?”

“ She was at Tresilian Vale, a few weeks after your departure, when Louisa said she could not have known her to be the woman she saw at Oak Hill. Separation from Harriet, and satisfaction in Louisa’s marriage, have undoubtedly made her much happier; but as her behaviour was infinitely better than it ever was before her displeasure with Harriet, the grand

cause of the transformation must be found in her having it no longer in her power to indulge her wayward humour.

Tresilian, who knows nothing of her former temper, behaved to her with the greatest respect and kindness, which gratified her extremely, and will secure her harmony with Louisa.

She is now at Miss Prunes, whence she returns in a short time to settle at Ramsgate, and thus ends the union of the Hargrave family. You are now not only delivered from your two tormentors, Harriet and Miss Alderton, but see them severely, though perhaps not sufficiently, punished. You may imagine the mortification of the latter, when in the same week, she heard that Sir Esmond was a married man, and of Frederic's accession of fortune."

"Do you know any thing of Philip?"

"Philip is married, and the conduct of his wife seems to rest lightly upon her mind. Sir Esmond saw her before he left town, and heard of her from many. She has all the easy assuming manners, which distinguish so many women of fashion; no gentleness, no diffidence, no retiring delicacy is seen in her behaviour,—

nothing which can lead you to say, this woman has been unfortunate; in a moment of infatuation she was misled, but her conduct and character were at variance.

It is not always easy, Constantia, to judge fairly of a woman's conduct upon a failure in virtue; but it is seldom difficult to decide upon her character from her subsequent behaviour."

CHAPTER XXXV.



It was the practice of Mr. Anson to keep the birth-days of his near relations and particular friends. He had been accustomed to it from infancy, and found much pleasure in giving an entertainment to a party of friends on such occasions.

Sir Esmond did not approve of the custom, but he respected the feelings of his uncle, and paid particular attention to the anniversary of his birth.

In a few days, Mr. Anson was to complete his seventieth year, and Sir Esmond intended that Lady Anson should, on that day, for the first time, dine at Anson House, and that a fête should be given to his tenants.

He did not wish that it should otherwise be

a day of public entertainment ; the inhabitants of Delvin Lodge, Mr. and Mrs. Tresilian, Sir Robert and Lady Herndon, and Sir Frederic Ormville being all the company intended.

Sir Robert had been very cordially invited, and had cheerfully promised to come, and the rest of the party were solicitous to honour the day, and show every attention in their power to the wishes of Sir Esmond.

The day before it, Sir Robert went to a county meeting, which he was anxious to attend, and Lady Herndon took the opportunity to make a visit to her friends at Delvin Lodge.

She spent the morning with them happily, and looked forward with much pleasure to the enjoyment of the afternoon in the same affectionate circle,—but hardly was dinner over, before she received a message from Sir Robert to inform her, that he was come home ill, and begged to see her immediately.

She instantly left Delvin Lodge in great fear and perturbation, and travelled with the utmost expedition to Elbourne.

When she arrived, she inquired of the servant, who opened the door, how his master was ?

He answered that he did not know exactly, but believed that he was not quite well.

On entering the hall, she observed that a small statue, which stood in it, was broken, and she asked who had done it ?

Her second son, who had come to the door to welcome her return, came close to her, and softly said, " It was me, but Mathew told Papa it was Cesar."

" I am sorry, Mathew," said Lady Horndon, turning to the servant, " that you said what was not true."

" Master John could not help it, Ma'am," answered Mathew, " for as he was going past, he fell and overturned the statue, but I thought my master would be so terribly angry with him, that I could not find in my heart to tell the truth."

The force of this apology, Lady Horndon felt too sensibly to make any reply.

As she was going up stairs, her eldest son came running after her, and in a whisper, begged that she would not send for him, if she could help it, as he did not wish to be near Papa.

"Has he been angry with you about the statue, my dear?" said Lady Horndon.

"No," replied Edward, "but he came home in very bad humour, and has been very bad to us all."

Lady Horndon's heart beat, and with trepidation she opened the drawing-room door.

When she entered, Sir Robert was lying upon a sofa.—She advanced with much anxiety, and was going in the kindest manner to ask how he was, when he prevented her by exclaiming, "The next time, Lady Horndon, that you take the *diversion* of visiting, will you be so good as leave orders, that your affairs be taken care of in your absense. When I came

home to-day, every thing was in the most horrible disorder ; all the doors were open,—the chairs in the parlour were turned topsy turvy, and the children had scattered all their trumpery in the dining-room.”

“ They did not expect you home before the evening,” replied Lady Horndon, gently.

“ And so, Madam, because they did not expect me at home, every thing was to go into confusion?—This is new doctrine indeed ! that a man must stay at home to keep his house in order !”

“ It was natural for the children to take a little liberty in our absence.”

“ And you think, because it is natural, it is right !—It would have been very natural for me to have gone home with Miss Penser to-day, whom I met with on my way here ; but I believe you would not have liked it much.—It would have been very natural, too, for her to come here, which she seemed very much inclined to do.—Poor thing ! I dare say, she would be glad to be in your place.”

Sir Robert paused, and half a minute after Lady Horndon said, I was told that you were ill; do you feel yourself indisposed?

“Feel myself indisposed! By Heavens, Madam, your visits to Delvin Lodge improve you mightily!—Can you fancy, that I would send to tell you I was ill, without feeling myself indisposed?”

“I am sure, my dear, you must know what I meant.”

“No, my dear, I could not know what you meant; I have not understanding to unravel intricate meanings.—People in general, I believe, employ language to interpret their thoughts; you use it to perplex and surprise.—And a pretty while you have been here before you think proper to inquire about me! You heard that I was ill, yet have been half an hour in the room without asking how I was.”

“I asked the first minute——”

“Yes, yes,” interrupted Sir Robert, “you asked the very first minute that you recollected.”

“ Will you now tell me, what is the matter with you ?”

“ I believe, that I have got a cold ;—I felt myself very uncomfortable at the meeting,—there was a stoppage in my nose.”

“ If that is all, I hope it will soon go off.”

“ Yes, and carry me with it !—How can you tell that it may not be the commencement of a fever or consumption ? The worst disorders have very slight beginnings, and all ailments should be strictly attended to at first. For that reason, I came home before dinner, but I might as well have staid, I found the house so disagreeable. It was horribly empty and comfortless, and I have been kept in a fever ever since.—Had you had any consideration, you would have left Eliza at home, lest I should return soon ; she would have been something in the house.”

“ Mrs. Blight called, and said she would take her if she was not going with me, and as I did not like her being with Mrs. Blight, I carried her to Delvin Lodge.”

“What ridiculous stuff!—so a look from Mrs. Blight is to corrupt the child!—I wish she may never meet with worse. Mrs. Blight is, after all, not at all a bad woman; I am persuaded she has a very good heart, but she has been unlucky—damn’d unlucky in a husband.—That however is a thing of which you have no feeling. If you knew what some women suffer, you would be able to form some notion of your own happiness.—There was Pickering to day; he will go home to his wife to-night quite drunk!”

Lady Horndon did not answer, and, after a short silence, Sir Robert said, “When you go abroad, my dear, do you give your cook orders to neglect her duty? I never had a dinner worse dressed than to-day; there was not a thing tolerably done.”

“I am very sorry to hear it.”

“It could not have happened more unluckily; I shall be much the worse for it. Your servant had no apology, for it was only a few things I desired,—two or three little things, nice and good, as my appetite required to be tempted;

“but if she had taken pains to spoil them, she could not have succeeded better. She heard that I was ill, and I suppose wished to make me worse.”

“It is strange, that she should be negligent, for I have always given her the strictest injunctions to be particularly careful in dressing your food.”

“I know nothing more provoking than to lose a dinner in such a way ; but it is seldom one can get a good meal from the insufferable carelessness and stupidity of servants. Indeed there is such a want of taste in their superiors, that there are few houses I choose to dine in.”

“You did not, I hope, lose your dinner to-day entirely ?”

“Very nearly. I sent to ask the cook how she could send me such food, and she pretended that I hurried her, but an excuse is never wanting in this house. Did you observe, as you came through the hall, the statue broken ?”

“I did.”

“They tell me that Cæsar broke it, but I don’t believe them. I dare say it was one of the children or servants; they only said it was Cesar, because he is my dog. But they can’t deceive me;—with you, they find no difficulty in lying; your weak indulgence of your children and servants, must make them constantly impose upon you.”

Lady Horndon remained silent, and in a few minutes, Sir Robert ordered tea. He desired that she would make it herself, and take care to make it excellent.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE next morning, Sir Robert said that he was still unwell, and did not believe that he should be able to go abroad. He took a very good breakfast, however, but soon after told Lady Horndon, that he must send an apology to Sir Esmond; that he felt himself so lazy and heavy, it would be disagreeable to go from home, and very unsafe.

She replied that it would be wrong to think of it, since he was unwell, but she was sorry for Sir Esmond's disappointment.

"Pho!" cried Sir Robert, "he deserves it; the Anson family are ridiculous in their attention to birth-days. For private individuals to make a regular practice of keeping them is the most absurd thing in the world. How can they be sure that they will be in a humour to rejoice

on the return of any day, and when misfortunes intervene, the recurrence of it must aggravate the pain of recollection?"

"I believe," said Lady Horndon, "that Sir Esmond thinks so, but he wishes to do what is agreeable to his uncle."

"But I won't indulge Mr. Anson in such folly.—For my own part, I should be much obliged to any man, who could contrive to make me forget my age. I don't want to be reminded of growing old.—There is the strangest absurdity about most people;—'tis astonishing how few have common sense!"

"Mr. Anson is an old man, which may excuse him in many things, but he is very good, and the attention which Sir Esmond pays him is truly amiable."

"Are you such a simpleton as to suppose, that Sir Esmond has no view to his uncle's fortune?"

"Don't you think Sir Esmond an excellent character?"

“ Does that prevent his knowing the *proper time* to give a fête?—Pho! you are quite a fit companion for old Anson!—Do go, and rejoice with him to-day. I dare say you will like the thing, and leaving me is nothing.”

“ I certainly shall not go without you.”

“ O yes, go and divert yourself; my being alone is of no consequence. Go, and take Eliza, since she is invited; I shall get Fanny to do little matters for me; 'tis no matter how I am, if you are amused.”

“ I could not think of going, if you were here alone.”

“ Pho, pho; what does it signify? I am not very ill; that is, I am but in the beginning of an illness; it may not be much worse,—I may get better.”

“ However trifling your disorder, I cannot leave you.”

“ That is quite weak and childish. I am, no doubt, much happier when you are at home,

but that is no reason for your giving up an entertainment you like better. I am used to a quiet mode of life, and can put up with it.—I believe there is no man of my fortune, who lives so quiet, domestic a life as I do.—It is astonishing how few pleasures I enjoy ! I am never in any gay or dissipated parties ; seldom partake of public amusements ; never go to Newmarket, or am seen galloping with a pack of hounds ;—do not drink, game, or seek after Opera girls ;—in fine, I lead a life, which to most men would be insupportable,—worse than annihilation to those, who have no feeling of decorum or morality.—Good Heaven ! what a world this would be, were all men like me !”

Sir Robert paused, but Lady Horndon offering no reply, he was beginning to speak again, when a servant came to inquire, if he could receive a visit from Sir Thomas Vyner ?

“ Certainly,” he cried, “ I shall be happy to see Sir Thomas.”

“ He is coming,” said Sir Robert, as soon as the servant had withdrawn, “ to plague me

about Emlington, but I can't avoid seeing him ; I hope his visit will be short."

" Do you intend to give him the living ?"

" Not if I can easily avoid it.—It would be very imprudent to neglect such an opportunity of conferring a benefit to more advantage. Sir Thomas is an old man now ; he will probably soon step off, and his heir will not think himself obliged to me for the favours I did his predecessor."

" But Sir Thomas is a most excellent man, and was so great a friend of my father's, that I should feel the utmost pleasure in obliging him."

" Yes, but would you have me therefore, such a ninny as to neglect the interest of my family ? Your weakness is quite ludicrous.—Go, and write a note to Sir Esmond ; tell him that I am sincerely sorry I must be deprived of the pleasure of rejoicing with him and his good uncle to-day, as I am so ill that it might be unsafe to go abroad, and likewise so much oppressed with a head-ach, as to be unfit for com-

pany. You know what should be said ; do it in the best manner you can,——and as to yourself, do as you please."

Lady Horndon withdrew, and a moment after, Sir Thomas was introduced.

"My dear Sir Thomas," cried Sir Robert, "I am most heartily glad to see you ; I hope you are well."

"In my usual way, Sir, but I am sorry to hear that you are indisposed ; your servant was doubtful if you could admit me."

"It is true, I am not very well, but I should be ill indeed, before I could decline the pleasure of seeing you. I hope that Lady Vyner is in good health ?"

"She is well, Sir, but what is your disorder ?"

"A bad cold and severe head-ach ; I hope it will soon go off, but it prevents my going abroad."

“ You should certainly be careful ; colds are troublesome, when neglected.”

“ It happens very unluckily, for I was engaged to keep the birth day of our worthy friend Mr. Anson.”

“ You will feel that a disappointment, for he is a truly good man, and a long tried friend.”

“ There cannot be a better man ; it would have given me particular pleasure to have rejoiced with him and his nephew on such an occasion, and unfortunately Lady Horndon has taken such a fit of anxiety about me, that she won't be persuaded to go.”

“ Lady Horndon is too good a wife to relish a party of pleasure, when you are ill.”

“ But my illness is so trifling, that it really is of no consequence, and I am very unwilling that she should be deprived of so agreeable a party.”

“ As you are indisposed, Sir, I ought not to fatigue you with speaking ; I only called to say

a few words about my poor friend Emlington. You have probably had various applications for the living, and perhaps from persons that you wish to oblige, in which case, I should be sorry to interfere. When I wrote to you the other day, it was with no desire that you should do what was inconvenient. I merely wished you to know the excellent character, and unhappy poverty of my friend, being certain that they would speak sufficiently in his favour, if circumstances permitted your serving him."

" You do me honour, Sir, by the supposition, and I beg you to be assured, that I should have the utmost pleasure in promoting Mr. Emlington both on his own account and yours. I have indeed, had other applications, and some that I should wish, at least, to decline as civilly as I could; one in particular, I feel some embarrassment about, but in a few days I shall be better informed upon the subject, and shall then give you a decisive answer."

" If you find any difficulty in serving Emlington, I beg that you will not think of it, for I came to relieve you about him. Early this

morning, Sir Frederic Ornvile called upon me, to tell me that one of his livings had just become vacant, and was at my command for Emlington, for whom he had very accidentally heard of my concern. I asked if there was no other person he wished to oblige?—Were my father alive, he replied, your friend would be the first object of his care.—At the mention of his father, he was so much affected that he could not proceed, and it was some time before he recovered himself sufficiently to tell me, that it would give him particular pleasure, if he could in *any way* be the means of relieving my anxiety about my poor friend.—He is a most amiable young man.”

“ He is indeed uncommonly excellent, and I am happy that it is now in my power to promise Emlington my living, for if I find myself embarrassed with the other candidate, I can at the worst be relieved by obtaining Sir Frederic’s for him, which will acquit me completely.”

“ If you think so, I shall rejoice, for on many accounts, your living would be particularly desirable for my friend.”

"You may then, Sir, assure him of it as soon as you please, and nothing will be more agreeable to me, than to promote so worthy a man. It is doing a public benefit;—such men are wanted to give a proper example of religious duty and moral conduct."

"He is a most respectable character, and his large family renders him doubly interesting."

"You have heard, I suppose, Sir Thomas, of the handsome manner in which Sir Frederic has behaved to his family, since his accession of fortune?"

"I have; Mrs. Almoré informed me of it."

"She could hardly do justice to the generous feeling, and delicate propriety, with which he has conducted himself in every respect."

"It gives me the truest pleasure. Has no discovery been yet made about the Will?"

"None, and we wish the matter to be forgotten; it leads to suspicions painful and disgraceful, and possibly unjust. It is happy for

the family, that they now see so excellent a representative of your venerable friend, whose loss must ever be deplored."

"It is a loss of which I am not yet very able to speak.—The great solace of my life, departed with Sir John Orville.—I will now, Sir, bid you adieu; I beg to be very kindly remembered to Lady Horndon."

"Will you not stay and do us the favour to take a family dinner? It will give us particular satisfaction. Lady Horndon was this *very* morning speaking of you with the highest respect, and mentioning with much feeling, the great friendship which had subsisted between you and her father."

"Another day, I will wait upon her with much pleasure; at present you are too much indisposed for company."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHEN Sir Thomas had taken leave, Lady Horndon, accompanied by her eldest daughter, returned to inform Sir Robert, that Ambrose Doyley's wife had just been with her, to request that he and Mrs. Almorne, and her brother, would come to Molton as soon as possible, as her husband wished to give them important information.

"Ah!" cried Sir Robert, "is the fellow going to speak at last? This is happy!—Where is his wife?"

"Gone home; her husband desired her not to wait an instant after she had delivered her message."

"I shall go to him directly, and shall call for your brother in my way. Do you write a note

to Mrs Almorne, and request her to meet us immediately at Molton. Have you sent my apology to Sir Esmond?"

"I wrote to my sister to desire that she would make it; my note was just dispatched when Doyley's wife arrived."

"How unlucky! why the devil did not the fellow send his message sooner! I must now however dine at Anson House; Doyley will explain my coming abroad, and——"

He was interrupted by the entrance of Constantia, who came to inquire after him in consequence of the alarm his message had given at Delvin Lodge the preceding evening.

To his great joy, she had received her sister's note on her way to Elbourne, and he begged she would not now mention it, as he would keep his engagement; and after hastily informing her of the cause of his sudden change of measures, he left her to prepare for his excursion.

Lady Horndon retired also, to write to Mrs.

Almorne, and Constantia remained with Eliza, of whom she wished to make some inquiries.

Sir Robert's appearance and behaviour, so very different from what she had been led to expect from his messages, surprised her; and her concern for her sister ever awake, made her anxious for an explanation.

She asked Eliza, what illness her father had complained of in the morning?

"I don't know," replied Eliza, "and I don't believe he knows himself, for he has never given it a name."

"He has felt symptoms of disorder," said Constantia, "which are now going off."

"They went off as soon as he heard of Ambrose Doyley's message, for I came into the room with Mamma, when she told him, and I observed that he got well in an instant."

"What was the matter last night, when he was so ill?"

“ He was very ill indeed, but it was only of——”

“ Of what ?”

“ Of bad temper ; but I would not say so to any body but you.”

“ I am very sorry that you should say so, even to me.”

“ You wanted to know what was the matter with him, and I am sure you would be displeased if I did not speak the truth.”

“ I hope you are mistaken about your father.”

“ Indeed I am not ; I know his way quite well.”

“ I thought, Eliza, that he was never out of temper now.”

“ For a long time he was very good,—at least he was very tolerable, but of late he has been very different.”

“ Does he behave as he did last summer ?”

"O no, not at all so bad; he is never in such frightful passions with Mamma, nor is he even so terrible to us; yet there will be whole days that he is displeased with every thing, and Mamma knows not either what to say or do.— He was put out of humour with the loss of the Will, for soon after grandpapa's death, his temper became much worse."

Alas! thought Constantia, he was no longer restrained by self-interest.

"If it were not for Mamma," resumed Eliza, "I should wish to be away from him as much as Edward does."

"Can Edward desire to be away?"

"Indeed he does; he wishes that he may never be near him."

"That is very wrong in Edward."

"He says he can't help it. He wishes to be good like Mamma, but he is never good when he is near my father, as he makes him so unhappy, and makes Mamma and all of us so un-

happy. He used to hate Papa for this, and then hate himself for doing so, and thus become quite miserable and bad ; but since he came last home, he told me that he did not think so ill of himself for it, as the more he sees and thinks, the less and less he likes his father.

“ Does your mother suspect this ? ”

“ O no ; he would tell no body but me. I wish, aunt, you could see what a different creature he is when from home. He says, he can learn any thing elsewhere, but here he is quite stupid from unhappiness.”

“ You grieve me, my dear.”

“ It is still worse with John ; from being a very good humoured boy, he has become quite sour and cross ; and Fanny is such a timid little thing, that she does not recover a fit of anger in Papa for a whole day. Fear makes them both tell lies, which vexes Mamma terribly, but John won't be persuaded that it is wrong, for he says Papa obliges every body about him to tell lies, and that he tells them himself ; for he hears

him speak quite differently to strangers, from what he 'does after they are gone.—Edward says, he should have had as little regard to truth as John, if he had not been so much with Frank Vyvian, who abhors a lie, and every thing his father disapproves.”

“How! has Edward no respect for his mother's instructions? I am sure that she disapproves of falsehood.”

“He would do any thing to oblige Mamma, but he says he does not know sometimes what to think of her instructions, for she bids him speak truth at the very moment he hears her tell a lie herself at my father's desire; and she enjoins him to love goodness at the same time that she desires him to respect his father,—now he cannot do both, and he often thinks Mamma cannot really in her heart wish us to respect Papa.”

The return of Lady Horndon put a stop to Eliza's communications.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

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WHEN Mrs. Almorne, with Sir Robert and Sir Frederic, met at Ambrose Doyley's, they were told by his wife that he was dying, and that he was most anxious to see them, while he had yet strength to speak.

She then went to inform him they were come, but was very long in returning; the agitation, which the thoughts of seeing them had thrown him into, having, she said, nearly overpowered him.

She conducted them to his chamber, where, by his own desire, the day-light was excluded, and a taper, in a corner of the room, was all the light that was admitted.

To render their introduction as little painful to him as possible, Mrs. Almorne, in a very

gentle tone, made some civil inquiries respecting his health, for which he thanked her, but said that he had no concern about himself; he believed that he was very near his end, and should be glad to be released from the misery he suffered.

He then paused, and it was some minutes before his perturbation permitted him to say, that he was anxious, before he died, to atone, as far as it was in his power, for the injustice which he had committed.—Again he stooped, and it was after many interruptions that he confessed that he had seized and carried off the Will, at the desire of Sir Hastings.

He said that in September, Mr. Ornvile had been very kind to him, and had laid him and his family under great obligations, and in October had told him that he was afraid of being disinherited by his father, because he intended to marry from affection a young girl of very humble birth. Mr. Ornvile said that he was the more afraid of this, from believing that he had enemies, who would misrepresent his conduct and his wife's to his father; and he desired that he would give him notice the moment he

suspected that any alteration had been made in his father's settlement.

He likewise prevailed upon him, after much persuasion, to promise that he would, as soon as his father died, at whatever period that might be, secrete his Will, and keep it concealed till he could deliver it to himself.

Mr. Ornvile protested in the most solemn manner, that the sole purpose of this was to prevent his being defrauded of his just right by the machinations of others, and the wounded pride of his father and mother ; and swore that he would restore to his family, and the other legatees, all to which they were justly entitled.

He said, that he was very unwilling to trust in Mr. Ornvile's promises, as he had never loved or esteemed him, as he did the rest of the family ; but that his wife had received such high impressions of him from his servant Nelson, and was so much pleased with the numerous presents he had sent her, that she was constantly talking in his favour, and urging him to oblige him by every means in his power. She did not know, he said, the nature of the service

that Mr. Ornvile required of him, as before he knew it himself, he had taken an oath never to reveal it; but she endeavoured to persuade him that his obliging his young master would make the fortune of his family, while the offending him might be their ruin; and he saw her so happy in the gifts which Mr. Ornvile had already made her, that, in opposition to his own opinion and inclination, he yielded at last to her wishes, and the solicitations of Mr. Ornvile, and promised upon oath to obey his directions, and keep the matter a profound secret.

Accordingly, upon the death of Sir John, he took the Will, and delivered it into the hands of Sir Hastings at Canterbury; but on returning to the Abbey, where he had then nothing to do, but to think of his excellent old master and all the family, he became so miserable that he could not remain in the house.—He had never since, he said, enjoyed a moment's peace, and his remorse had been aggravated by finding that Sir Hastings made no compensation to the legatees for their loss.—He had been particularly distressed for Miss Ornvile, whose happiness was so suddenly torn from her, and

whom he had loved and respected since she was a child.

It was his intention, he declared, to have insisted with Sir Hastings on the performance of his promise, the moment he came to Ornaville; but that his oath, and the fear of ruining his family, had prevented his making any discovery to Sir Robert or Mr. Edgeworth. The death of Sir Hastings had now put him at liberty to acknowledge his guilt, and he hoped that, after the confession he had made, Sir Frederic, whose goodness he well knew, would fulfil the Will of his father.

He concluded by imploring, that his innocent family might not suffer for his wickedness. —For himself, he said, though he were to live, he should neither desire nor deserve any mercy, but that his punishment was already exemplary, as he was dying from the effects of remorse.

Sir Frederic assured him that his family should not suffer for what was past, and that the confession he had made, should remain unknown, except to the most intimate friends of the family. He likewise told him that he had

already taken measures for fulfilling his father's intentions, which should be in every particular faithfully performed ; but he was, notwithstanding, extremely glad of the discovery he had made, as it would prevent the legatees from feeling themselves under the smallest obligation to him for the property they were to receive.

Doyley expressed the truest thankfulness for these assurances, and said that he should now, during the short time he had to live, experience a state of comparative peace.

Sir Robert heard his confession with unqualified pleasure ; but in the breast of Sir Frederic it excited much pain. It was not necessary to convince him that his father had left a Will, which it was his duty to fulfil ; and though he had scarcely ever entertained a doubt of his brother's guilt, he yet suffered in hearing it thus confirmed.

His sisters received the intelligence with mixed sensations. It removed their scruple with respect to the intentions of their brother Frederic, but left on their minds a painful con-

viction of the unfortunate character of their eldest brother.

But the thoughts of Constantia were diverted from the consideration of it, by anxiety about Lady Horndon, whose peace she now saw again broken by the temper of her husband, while no hope of a remedy remained. She took the first opportunity of communicating the discovery to Mrs. Almorne, and intreating her counsel; though less from any rational expectation of her being able to suggest means of relief, than from an habitual feeling of confidence in her power to give consolation, in which she had never yet been disappointed.

Nor upon this occasion did she find herself mistaken, for she was now informed by her, that the nine thousand pounds bequeathed to Lady Horndon by her father, was settled upon herself for her sole and separate use; which, by giving her independence, would both prove a check on the behaviour of Sir Robert at present, and would ultimately put it in her power, if she thought proper, to leave him; for so careful had her father been of her independence, that he did not permit her to dispose of her fortune,

during the life of her husband, unless, in the event of separation from him, she chose to sink it for an annuity.

“ Had your eldest brother lived,” said Mrs. Almorne, after giving Constantia this intelligence, “ and had you been removed to a distance, my fears for the peace of your sister would have been great ; but now I have little apprehension. In a few days, Sir Robert will be made acquainted with the terms of your father’s Will, and in knowing that she is independent,—that she has such a friend as you always near to counsel her,—and is surrounded by others able and solicitous to protect her, he will feel that his own comfort and credit rest entirely on his good conduct to her, and henceforth will not dare to hazard his own peace, by destroying hers.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE purchase of Oak Hill was soon made, and the Hargrave family having left great part of their furniture in the house, in the view of its being disposed of, it likewise was obtained, and Oak Hill thus rendered fit for the reception of Constantia, almost as soon as it was in her possession.

Some additional furniture, and several alterations were however necessary, and as soon as they were made, Mrs. Almorne carried Constantia to see them, that they might be assured that nothing was omitted which could contribute to comfort or convenience.

They began their survey in the lowest part of the house, proceeding at leisure through the rest of it, and Mrs. Almorne leading the way as she thought proper.

The rooms she reserved for visiting last, were the drawing-room, and one which was intended for a library.—“Here,” said Mrs. Almoré, upon entering it, “is a handsome room for a library; and there,” continued she, pointing to a range of boxes that stood on the floor, “is a valuable collection of books, and a very fine selection of prints; the first a present from Mr. Anson,—the latter from Sir Esmond, who, some years ago, heard you say that you should wish to have your house ornamented with prints. Among the ornaments of your house, Constantia, your own drawings at Silver-Moss will form a distinguished part.

On hearing of your intended marriage, Mr. Anson wished to make you a present suitable to the occasion, but being at a loss on what to resolve, he put two thousand pounds into the hands of Lady Anson, and requested that she would employ it in the manner she thought proper.

She imagined that books would be more agreeable to you than any personal ornament or costly furniture, but before she decided, wished to know my opinion. I told her, that although you had always been distinguished for your

taste in dress, I was certain that you would be extremely mortified if any part of your attire could be observable for show or richness; and I had therefore no doubt that books would be the most agreeable offering you could receive; but I requested that they might be chiefly such books as were not in my library, which one day or other would be yours. She complied, and as you may now command the use of mine, you may consider yourself as possessing one of the best in the kingdom."

"Can I ever," cried Constantia, "be enough grateful for the friends I am blessed with!"

Mrs. Almorne without answering, led her into the drawing-room, where the moment she entered, she was struck with pleasing, yet sad surprise, on beholding the portraits of her father and mother.

"Ah! my friend," cried she, eagerly grasping her hand, "how shall I thank you for this?"

"It is not me, my love, you have to thank; I intended you this satisfaction, but my design was anticipated by Mr. and Mrs. Tresilian.

On hearing me mention the farewell you had taken of these pictures, they immediately requested of Hastings permission to take copies of them, which he gave, and they were instantly sent to town, from which they returned a few days ago with the copies intended for you, but Frederic has kept them for himself, and given you the originals."

"How much am I indebted to them!—They have indeed given me a happiness I did not expect,—and dearly shall I prize it!—With what delight shall I contemplate these representations of my revered father and mother!—a look at them will remind me of all the beauty of goodness, and lead my steps in the paths I wish!"

Mrs. Almorne was hardly less affected than Constantia, at the sight of the portraits. Their resemblance to her departed friends struck her forcibly, and made her yield to effusions of sorrow——

On their way home, she endeavoured to engage Constantia in conversation, but her faltering accents showed that she was unequal to it.

“ In future years, my love,” said Mrs. Almorne, “ The memory of other times, will come like the evening sun upon your soul.”——
At present, it is too much for you, and I wish to remove you from Kent as soon as you are married. Were you to remain here, you would be constantly engaged in a crowd of company, where every object would remind you of the past: I have therefore been thinking that it would be better for you to make a tour somewhere.”

“ I did not think of a tour,” replied Constan-
tia; “ but I have often wished that we could all be transported to Silver-Mofs.”

“ You shall go there, my dear, and Frederic, and Mr. and Mrs. Tresilian will accompany you. I have been planning an excursion for your brother’s sake as well as yours; he requires change of scene, and I should think no scheme could suit him better than a journey with you and Valmonsor. You will visit Silver-Mofs, and continue your perambulations till winter. Louisa too, will be better for the excursion. I have suggested the scheme to them all, and they highly approve of it. I would not

“speak of it to you till I knew there were no obstacles in the way of it, and Sir Esmond has assured me that he is certain it will be particularly agreeable to Valmonsor.”

“I rejoice then, for no plan could be more agreeable to me, but I wish we could be accompanied by you.”

“It would give me much pleasure to be with you, but I cannot leave Lady Anson.

In a few days Valmonsor will return, but your marriage must still be delayed a short time, on account of the recent death of your brother. At one of the happiest moments of your life, you must wear, if you would not be thought unfeeling and indecorous, the face, as well as the garb of mourning, for a man, whose life was a misfortune, and whose death is a blessing to his family.”

CHAPTER XL.

THE following day, Mrs. Almorne told Constantia, that she wished to have some conversation with her in private, and withdrawing with her to her own apartment, she thus addressed her.

“ Since the first moment in which I had the happiness to regard you as a daughter, I have endeavoured to make myself your companion, as far as the difference of our age would permit ; and the mental difference between us has diminished so considerably of late, that I no longer wish you to view me as a mother by whose judgment it is your duty to be guided ; but as a friend with whom you may agree, or differ in opinion, as you think proper. You are now of an age to think for yourself, and will have a companion well qualified, and better

entitled than myself, to be your counsellor and guide ; but, before I resign the office of Mentor, there is one subject, the consideration of which, I earnestly wish to impress on your mind."

" I will listen attentively," answered Constantia, " and carefully treasure every word that you drop ; but do not, I beseech you, say that you will no longer be my adviser and guide ; I know too well the value of your instructions, not to regard the loss of them as a misfortune."

' I am far from meaning,' replied Mrs. Almorne, ' that you should not have the benefit of my experience, as far as it can be of use ; I wish only that you should not continue to give my opinions the weight of maternal authority. Hitherto you have seldom ventured to object to them, and have been guided by my judgment in opposition to your own ;—henceforth listen to me with caution ; investigate my sentiments carefully before you adopt them, and combat them freely, when they do not meet with your approbation. .

' Let truth be your object. Attain first prin-

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ciples, the only true basis of sound judgment, and exercise your own power of reasoning, without trusting implicitly to any authority. There cannot be a more fertile source of error, than blind deference to the judgment of others, however highly we esteem them ; for all human beings are liable to mistake, and too frequently adopt opinions without analysis, and thus become the slaves of prejudice.

‘ Embrace no opinion rashly, and maintain none positively. Be above the littleness of supporting one, merely because you have advanced it, and regard with candour and liberality the sentiments of others ; your judgment cannot be infallible, and a very short time may change your views.

‘ In giving you instruction, my dear friend, I have always endeavoured to make your own knowledge and judgment anticipate my opinions ; I wished to inform, not govern your mind, and the advice, which I am now going to offer, I would still withhold, did I not think your own experience had fitted you to receive it.

‘ In the Hargrave family you have seen the fatal effects which regard to the ties of consanguinity is capable of producing.—The deplorable and irremediable misfortunes of your brother Frederic, have all sprung from the improper dependence, which may be placed upon them ;—and your eldest and youngest brother have taught you, how inefficacious they are to give comfort or secure affection.

‘ Perhaps you may think these are partial instances of misfortune arising from this cause, but my experience tells me the contrary ;—they only afford an example of the numerous evils, which spring from this source.

‘ The services, which my fortune has empowered me to do to many, have withdrawn the veil, which conceals domestic situations from the public eye, and discovered to me, that a very great portion of the misery of mankind, that of women especially, flows from the regard which is indiscriminately paid to the ties of blood.

‘ The utmost respect for them where affection and esteem make us willing to suffer for rela-

tions, must be highly approved ; but unfortunately, we generallly suffer most through relations, whom we can neither love nor respect.—Did the consequence of this, affect only the peace of individuals, it might still perhaps, be regarded as an evil, which should be patiently submitted to,—but its baneful effects upon morals are prodigious.—Many, like Harriet Hargrave, are not only indulged in their vices by it, but the habit of tolerating vice, gradually weakens even in the good the sense of what is right. I could cite innumerable instances of the corruption of amiable characters, from the necessity of associating with, and pardoning in relations, errors, which they would not have forgiven in others.—There is not indeed a single crime, the most atrocious murders not excepted, which I have not known protected by the ties of consanguinity;—and the various ways in which they injure the peace of mankind are incalculable.

‘ Examine the history of almost all men in power, and you will find, that the promotion of their relations to places of trust and emolument, has been an invariable source of complaint. We often hear of persons raised to si-

tuations to which we cannot discover their pretensions, until we find they are related to the giver of the place. Yet it frequently happens, that the person, who exalted them, would not have given a sixpence from his own pocket, to have saved them from distress.—No, he has no regard for them, but he has been accustomed to consider relations as persons he should provide for, and who, he may expect, will be more ready to promote his interest than that of others, and he is therefore, extremely willing to serve them at the expense of the public.

‘ Thus, thousands of insignificant and worthless beings are promoted, to the infinite loss of society; and the accident of birth, instead of talents and virtues, is made a fountain of benefit.

‘ When I say the accident of birth, I do not mean it as confined to persons of family, for regard to the interest of relations runs through all ranks of society from the prince to the peasant.

‘ I had a servant lately, who applied to me to get her will made in favour of a niece, who

had used her extremely ill, and for whom she had no affection. I asked, why she did not prefer a friend, that was very poor, and to whom she was under great obligations. She answered that it was her duty to prefer a relation.

‘ What is the origin of all this ?—Is it natural affection ? No, for there is none, but that of parents to children. What is called natural affection, is nothing more than habitual sympathy.—In the infancy of society, the different branches of a family associated together for mutual defence ; kindred was then a necessary bond of union, but in proportion as nations became civilized, it was less requisite, and lost much of its influence.

‘ Near relations however, being usually placed in situations to create sympathy with each other, affection is expected to subsist among them, and when it does not, it is attributed to some defect in their character. This is one cause, why members of the same family so often desire to conceal their indifference to each other ; but another is the habit of considering their credit and interest as interwoven. As affection often

leads us to promote the advantage of relations, it is expected that it should always do so; and this affection being universally inculcated as a duty by parents and preceptors, has become a rule of conduct, to which persons, who really desire to do their duty, and those who wish to have the credit of doing it, attend.

‘ This is certainly productive of benefit to society, but the good it does is obvious, while much of the mischief it occasions, escapes observation. Some years ago, I happened to be with your father, when a young man, to whom he had rendered an essential service, came to thank him. Your father told him, that he should always have much pleasure in serving him, as he thought his merit great in having raised himself from a state of extreme poverty to prosperity, without being assisted by the kind offices of any relation.—His reply, I cannot forget.

“ The assistance of relations, Sir, which you naturally regret my want of, I consider as one of the most fortunate events of my life. At seventeen, when I was excessively idle and dissipated, I lost a kind uncle, who was the only

near relation I had, and on whom I depended. By his death, I was left without a friend or shilling in the world, for he had been supported by the emoluments of office. I saw myself without an alternative from misery, but industry, and I was not so much sunk in dissipation as to be incapable of it. I exerted myself, and very soon acquired both fortune and friends. Had my uncle lived a few years, I should probably have broken his heart, and been good for nothing ; for at a later period of life, bad habits have lasting effects."

' How often indeed, have I seen profligate people nourished in vice and idleness by their dependence on kind relations!—How frequently are the hard earned fruits of honest labour, torn from the industrious by worthless relatives !

' Were young men obliged to depend more upon themselves, and less upon relations than they commonly do, I am persuaded it would have the most salutary effect on their conduct. Merit would secure them friends, and is there any of the kind offices of relations, which friendship does not often perform ?—It would take root, and flourish with tenfold luxuriance,

were its progress not often impeded by the ties of blood, which too frequently occupy its place, without affording its advantages. No friendships ever exceeded those, which have subsisted between persons unconnected by blood, and no animosities have been stronger than those of kindred. Experience indeed has shown me, that the appellations of uncle, aunt, brother and sister,—even those of parent or child, are words of little meaning, and when I hear such relatives spoken of, I regard it as a mere chance, whether they are a comfort or misfortune in the lot of the individual.

‘ Let the ties of blood, then, be the auxiliary, but not the foundation of friendship, and let relations cease to be respected, when they cease to be respectable.

‘ It is my wish, that you should act upon this principle, if on consideration you approve of it, but do not be guided either by your ~~own~~ partial experience, or by my opinions. Observe and reflect, before you decide ; but when convinced you are right, be steady in the performance of your duty, though opposed to the opinions of others.

“ No person can have a stronger impression, or higher respect for the affection which subsists between relations, and is the offspring of habitual sympathy and early associations, than I have ; it is the abuse of it only that I wish to correct.

‘ Children of the same family are generally instructed to love each other, merely because they are brothers and sisters ; by which their understandings and affections are bewildered and degraded. Whenever young persons live together, they will be disposed to love each other, whether they are related or not, and the proper regulation of this propensity will strengthen their affections, and promote their good conduct.

‘ Teach your children, that virtue has the first claim to regard ; well founded friendship, the second ; the ties of consanguinity, only the third ; and that they deserve little consideration when unaccompanied by worth. More indulgence should certainly, from obvious causes, be allowed with respect to the ties of parent and child than others, but in no case should they prove a sanction for vice.

‘ This education will early impress on the minds of your children the importance of good conduct, and lead them to regard only what is really estimable. It will be the most effectual means you can employ, for attaching them truly to each other; for the exercise of the kind affections is the natural consequence of good morals. It will also be a means of preventing that selfishness, which so fatally distinguishes too many of the human race; for if children are trained to respect goodness as the first object of regard, the most expanded benevolence must necessarily spring in their hearts. Goodness and friendship are words, which cannot mislead;—their meaning is clear and positive. —Place your children in the straight road to virtue, and if they attain it, there is no danger of their failing in any of the duties of life. A man cannot be virtuous, without being a good relation; but many are the men, who are forced out of the road of virtue by the ties of blood, which are too often thorns in their way, tearing them to pieces, and tempting them to deviate into a thousand crooked paths.

‘ I should wish you not only to educate your family upon this principle, but to let it regulate

your conduct upon every occasion. Your brother Philip will unfortunately afford you an immediate occasion for practising it. You have said, that you intend to have no connection with him and his wife. If you adhere to this resolution, be above disguising it. Many live in enmity with their relations, yet appear in friendship with them, and this hypocrisy is termed regard to decency. There are but too many apologies for such behaviour, but let your's be superior. When your friends make inquiries about Philip, do not answer them by subterfuge; say freely that you disapproved of his conduct, and have therefore no intercourse with him. Say no more,—speak of him as seldom as possible, and never of his faults; do not be his enemy, though you cannot be his friend; and let your character, not your assertions, vouch for the propriety of your behaviour to him.

‘ I highly approve your intention of giving him the money he borrowed from you, that it may facilitate the payment of his debts. It will convince him that you are not guided by little feelings, but by a sense of what is right.

‘ You must prepare, however, for censure on
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the discovery of your sentiments. The amiable part of mankind will dislike them as repugnant to their feelings;—the worthless, as contrary to their interest; the weak, because nothing can be right, which is opposite to custom;—and they will be condemned by all, who being fortunate in their connections, and having little opportunity of knowing the situations of others, will not believe that opinions can be right which are contrary to the general usage of mankind.

‘ I have even heard many talk ably and conscientiously in support of the ties of blood, who yet discovered the most total disregard to them in their conduct. They argued from one feeling, and acted from another, wholly blind to their own inconsistency.

‘ It must be your part, not only to hear what is said, but to attend to what is done. In these times, when all opinions are so much the subject of discussion, you must be particularly careful not to be misled either by old or new theories; but inquire into facts, and endeavour to ascertain what may be practically best. If you find that I have not misrepresented the state of so-

ciety with respect to the ties of blood, and should therefore resolve on the conduct I recommend, its effects may be great. Mrs. Tressilian will certainly set you an example of what I wish in the education of her family; Lady Anson will imitate your's; and the precedent of a few upright characters acting on such principles, will soon be followed by others, who are at present deterred from it merely through fear;—and thus the improper influence of consanguinity may gradually diminish, till it shall at length be destroyed.

‘ Until this change is effected, vice and misery must continue to have a powerful influence in the society of mankind; but when the welfare of individuals shall cease to be unjustly dependent on the beings to whom they happen to be allied; then may we hope to find true Peace and Sincerity on Earth,—and Home, instead of being a Prison in which the Virtuous are condemned to associate with the Vicious, will become a secure refuge from the wicked, and the most delightful Asylum of Man.’

CHAPTER XII.

CONSTANTIA had suffered so many disappointments at the moment she least expected them, that till the day appointed for her marriage arrived, she could hardly believe that some unforeseen event would not still occur to separate her from Valmonsor.—The day however came, without an intervening cloud to overshadow her prospects. She was married in Ornvile church, in the presence of the friends she most loved, and as soon as the ceremony was performed, she and Valmonsor, accompanied by her brother, and Mr. and Mrs. Tresilian, set out on a tour, directing their course first to Silver-Moss.

THE END.

TO THE MEMORY OF

If, in the solitary hours
in which these pages have been written,
the remembrance of my Father's Virtues
warmèd my heart, and animated my mind
to the delineation of those qualities,
which are the great blessing of humanity;
to whom can this Work
be so properly inscribed?

TO THEE,

O SPIRIT OF MY FATHER!

I OFFER THIS SMALL TESTIMONY
OF TENDER RESPECT FOR THAT EXCELLENCE,
WHICH NONE BETTER KNEW,
OR VENERATED MORE HIGHLY,
THAN THY AFFECTIONATE DAUGHTER.

ERRATA.

Vol. I. page 67, line 3, read, was good; he knew
what was right, &c.

Vol. I. page 206, line 10, for situation, read
satisfaction.

Vol. II. page 213, line 21, for doubts, read *doubt.*

Vol. II. page 213, line 22, for ills, read *ill.*

Vol. III. page 24, line 16, dele have.

Vol. III. page 235, line 13, dele strong.

Vol. IV. page 71, line 7, dele of.

Vol. IV. page 179, line 9, for calaties, read
calamities.

Vol. IV. page 312, line 2, for on, read *in.*

Vol. V. page 230, last line, for having put in my
power; read for having put *it* in my
power.

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